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Issue 33 | February 2001



A

DRIVER A

- Greets colleagues with a firm self-confident handshake.
- Dated cheerleaders in high school.
- Has lipstick on underwear.
- Smokes after sex.

MSR

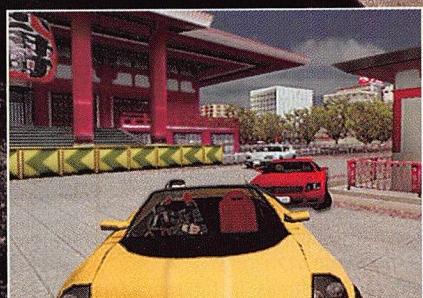
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B

DRIVER B

- Offers a limp and clammy handshake that screams of self doubt.
- Wasn't allowed to date in high school.
- Has superheroes on underwear.
- Apologizes after sex.



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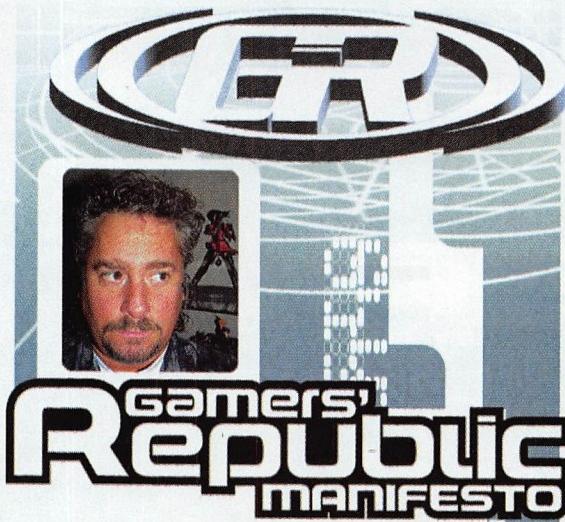


Dreamcast

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As another year comes to a close, we find ourselves saying the same thing we say every year: as great a year it was, the next promises to be even better.

2000 was a great year, due mainly to a steady flow of Dreamcast software that consistently raised the bar, the birth of online console gaming, and a banner fifth year for the amazing Sony PlayStation. The N64 stepped into the spotlight a couple of times as well, but had nowhere near the impact it had in the past, as Nintendo gears up to conquer the world with its second handheld riding on the heels of the single most successful piece of hardware on the planet, the Game Boy—and the Gamecube, Nintendo's first disc-based console.

As great a year it was, it did have its share of hiccups. Way too many gratuitous ports hit the market—scattered like land mines along software-isle walls—and many would-be PS2 owners returned home on October 26 with their heads hung low. In Sony's defense, the number of pre-books was unprecedented. I don't see how they could have managed it.

Now let's think about next year and try to refrain from jumping up on the closest piece of furniture and making like Parappa. At the outset we're going to begin to see what the PS2 can really do with ATV Offroad Fury, Zone of Enders, Bouncer, Onimusha, GT 3, Klonoa 2 and I'm sure a few more first-quarter surprises. Following that revelation, Sega is set to deliver the first episodical adventure game, Floigan Brothers, along with a host of sequels to play on-and offline, including the highly anticipated Phantasy Star Online. Sonic will also be bowing in again in 2001, along with Crazy Taxi, Jet Grind, and Shenmue. But the really big news will come at E3 when we all see and play the Game Boy Advance, Gamecube, and Xbox—the video-game equivalent of a single overhead cam 427.

All we want for Christmas is for the game companies that still don't get what we do to wake up and smell the enthusiast market, and throw us a bone or two. Beyond that, it'll be smooth sailing.

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Number of Angus look alike at the GR Christmas party-1

Number of post sushi stomach aches-3 and counting

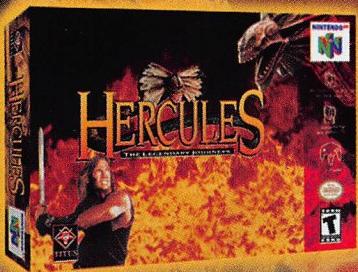
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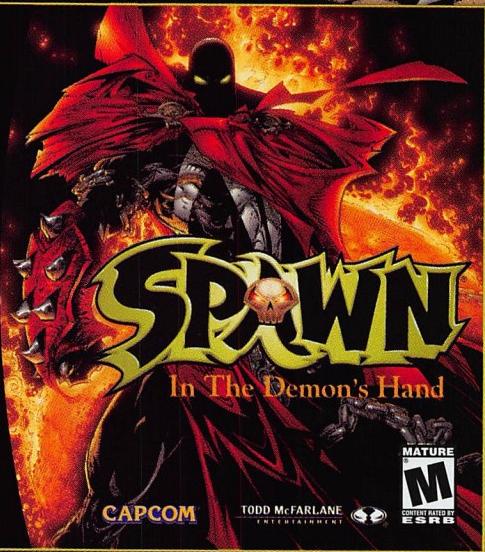
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TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
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KLONOA 2 .16

The sequel that every PlayStation aficionado was dying to see isn't just a reality - it's actually right around the corner! Klonoa's PS2 bid takes everything you loved about the original and cranks it up to euphoric levels. We've got the exclusive, hands-on scoop along with an interview with Klonoa producer Tsuyoshi Kobayashi.



SOUL REAVER 2 .54

Following the first celebrated Kain sequel (and the most abrupt ending in gaming history), Raziel creeps into his latest endeavor unconstrained—a Dreamcast and PS2 original. Prepare yourself...





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PHANTASY STAR ONLINE .50

Whether you play it alone, with friends, or both, Yuji Naka's new Phantasy Star delivers a groundbreaking online experience along with all of the nuances that helped propel the series into role-playing lore.



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FRONTLINES

THE FUTURE OF FANTASY

By now you've no doubt heard of "Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within," a film inspired by Square's sprawling Final Fantasy games; a CG creation so ambitious that an entire production studio – Square Pictures – was formed in a high-rise overlooking the gorgeous blue of the Pacific Ocean in Hawaii; a three-year vision costing more than Square would like to reveal.

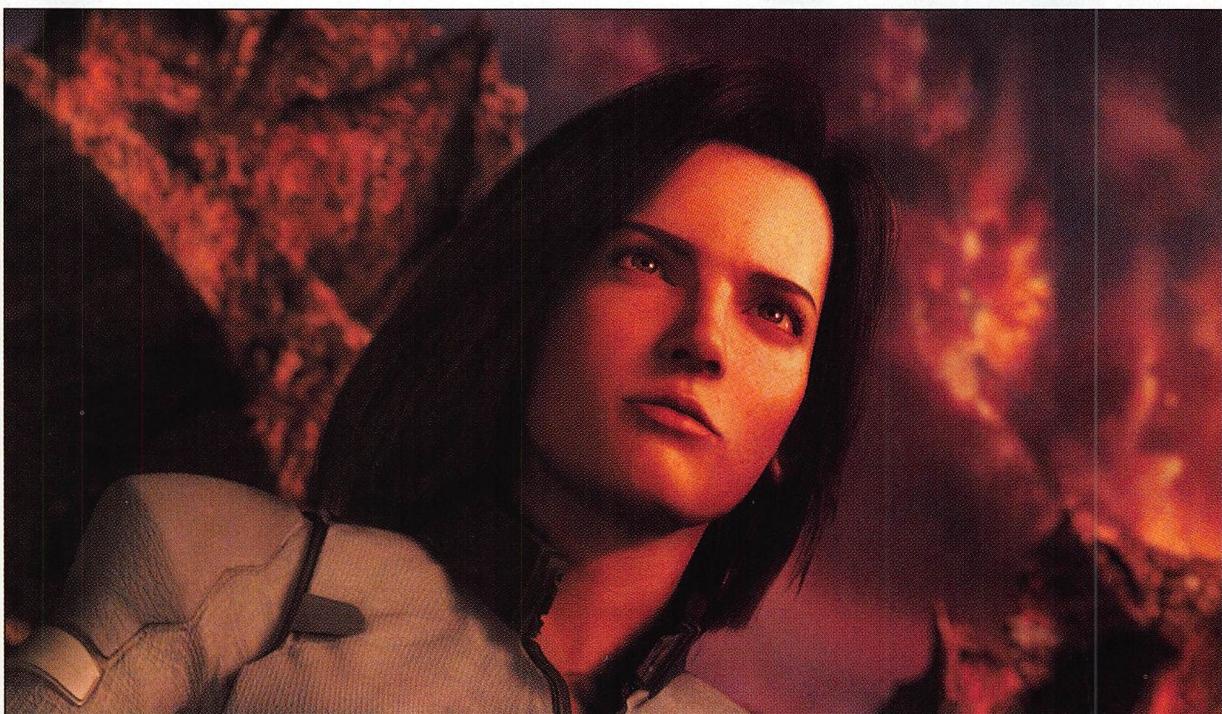
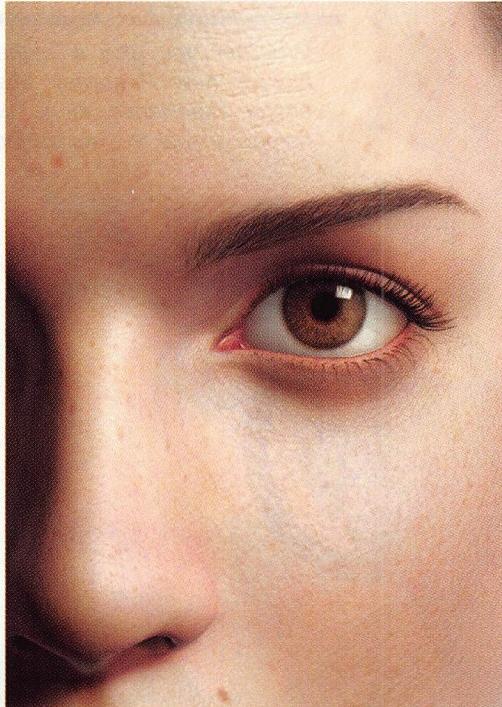
As with any big studio production before a final release, little concrete information is known about "The Spirits Within," other than that which has been generated by fan enthusiasm, PR tidbits, the recently released teaser trailer and the occasional still image. Normally, a glimpse into the pre-production of a movie is off-limits to the press, but recently, a handful of journalists were given a 17-minute screening of the film in a commercial theater in Honolulu. Impressions immediately formed: "Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within" is a remarkable achievement in visual sophistication. Its level of detail is unprecedented. The screen is filled with spectacular sights, vibrating with a richness in color and light and detail that doesn't exist in what we see as reality. It is pure fantasy, given life through a collection of artists' imaginations being poured into computer workstations.

A wide array of talent has been tapped to

bring Final Fantasy to the screen: artists who have worked on films like "Apollo 13," "Armageddon," "Fight Club," "Godzilla," "The Matrix," "Titanic," "Toy Story," "Princess Mononoke," and "Akira." Director Hironobu Sakaguchi, who as a gamemaker has been in charge of the FF series from its inception, gave his story ideas to screenwriter Al Reinert, whose "Apollo 13" script was nominated for an Academy Award, and Jeff Vintar.

The movie is entirely computer generated, like "Toy Story" and "A Bug's Life." But there is something different here, something immediately striking: the world is not a cartoon; it's made to look real—at least real in the sense that an alien planet is real in the very best sci-fi. Its inhabitants are humans, whose faces have been rendered with such a tremendous level of detail and realism that the effect of seeing them for the first time is disarming. Sakaguchi stresses just how important it was to ensure that these CG humans mirrored real

actors: "Because we grew up looking at other human faces, if there's even a small blemish or something slightly off on the facial features, it just looks very different, it seems very foreign to us, very alien. And that's what a CG character was before."



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Animated Violence



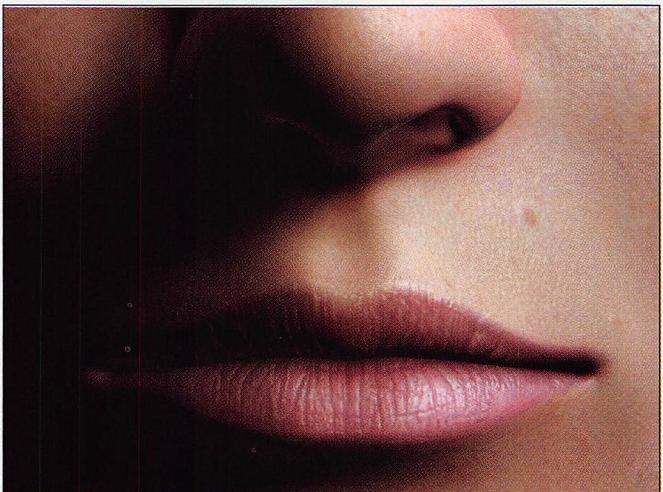


Y2E!
ADVANCED ELECTRONIC INTELLIGENCE

368~



A completely CG motion picture of this magnitude obviously calls for a CPU or two. Square is using a few hundred Sony GS Cube ultra-powerful workstations, each containing 16 times the power of a PlayStation 2!



"Whenever we looked at a CG character, it was alien, there was just something different about it. It wasn't what people were used to seeing. I don't get that looking at Aki or the other characters in the movie. I see them, and I register them as humans."

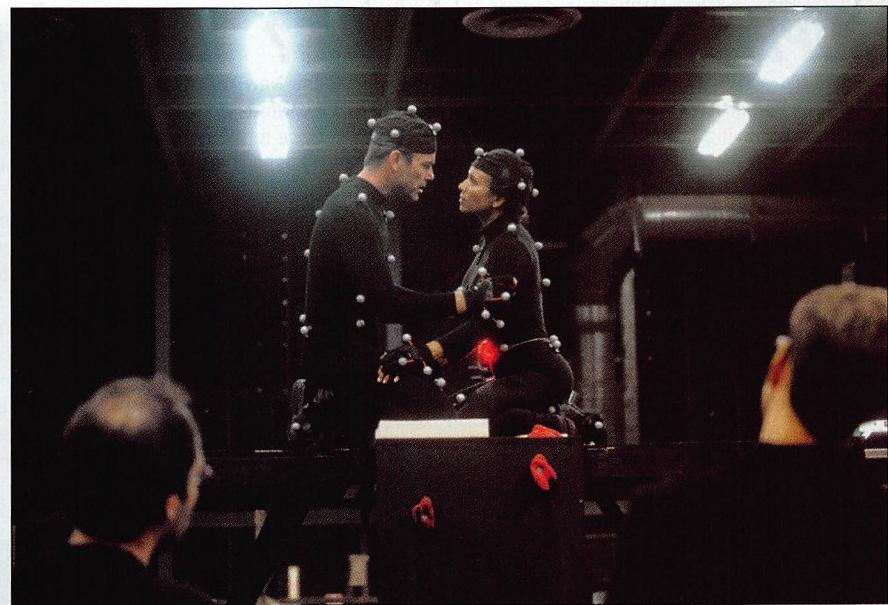
So much has been said about the characters in "*Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*" that it becomes easy to disregard any of the film's other achievements. If Sakaguchi fully realizes his vision, the movie will be more than a stage of lifelike characters: "You couldn't really place what genre this film would be in. It's a totally new, separate form of movie making. It's not just animation feature, but a new style of film."

The disjointed 17 minutes of footage screened left a mark with its imagery, and the action came on thick and fast, but what about the story? Sakaguchi is quick to point out that, "What you probably didn't see in the [footage is that there] is a lot of emotion and very high drama... I didn't want to portray a story that appeals to the younger audience... The thought of [reaching] for the younger audience never came to me."

Sakaguchi hopes the film will resonate through the power of the story as much as the images: "Whenever a person is in a tough time, or someone passes away or faces a difficult situation, if this movie can sort of be a reminder, or maybe they can think back and reflect on the themes of the movie when facing these hard times, that would be ideal for me."

Part of the film takes place on Earth, where everything is dusky and shadowy. "I wanted to create a setting where the issues of life and death, of life itself, had a more scientific approach, had some sort of an explanation attached to it," stated Sakaguchi.

"In order to tell that story, I wanted to set the movie to a futuristic setting... Because our goal was to create a human character as realistic as possible, to put them in a fictional environment gives us leeway to fake it or compromise. In order to take it to the next level, we needed to place our characters in a realistic background, or in reality, basically, so whoever looks at it will compare it to what's real. The inhabitants of an [alien] planet have pointy ears, or the appearance can be different, and we can get away with it. Because it's fictional. But if you set it on Earth, and there are humans, you



can't get away with that."

While the Final Fantasy name certainly resonates with millions of gamers, the film has little to do with the RPGs. In regards to this, Sakaguchi commented, "I wanted the audience to relate to the underlying theme, similar to what was in Final Fantasy VII and IX. I wanted the audience to make the [connection] on that level, rather than see a tie-in with magic or characters... I didn't want this movie to be just an offshoot of the games. But despite that, [if you look at the] Final Fantasy series, each one has a different plot, different characters, but the player recognizes the games as distinctly FF. So this is some level of consistency. Similarly, in the movie, even though it is different from the games, hopefully the audience will catch the similarities, the way there is relation to the Final Fantasy series."

It is, of course, the goal of the filmmakers that, when you see the final production this summer, you will be transported into the world they have created. It's a given that you will be oblivious to the thousands of hours of labor that went into creating countless bits and pieces of scattered ideas that somehow came together to create the cohesive 90 minutes of moving images onscreen. The reality is, to get to that end point, an amazing and exhaustive effort was spent, and hundreds of individuals worked together in an incredibly complex process—a process that was somewhat different from what Sakaguchi was used to in games. He says, "In gaming, there are sections and departments and highly specialized people. There are a key group of artists, but there are also programmers on the technological side of the project, who kind of did their own thing. However, in the movie project, most of the staff comes from more of an artistic background. Their opinions all go into the development of the image. Because there's not just one section, but an entire set of people commenting and giving input on how an image or scene should look, it makes it much more difficult to tie all that together."



At the beginning of the production cycle, the film is storyboarded (a process in which scenes the director has dreamed up are drawn out) before the artists begin to put their visions to computer. For *"Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within,"* the talent of staging director Tani Kunitake, who illustrated for *"Fight Club"* and *"The Matrix,"* was called upon. Producing one single shot is a painstaking process. An artist draws the foundation. Someone else might add color and texture. The lighting department plays with shadows, highlights, adds layers of focus to the image. If a scene calls for 2D elements or greater depth and density, the images are sent up to compositing, where entire chunks of detail are placed in. For effects, yet another department puts in particles, explosions, debris trails—whatever is called for. And then there's the creation of, say, a vehicle or ship that is placed in a scene. Or maybe the marble on a desk isn't quite natural, a leather coat isn't laying properly, so someone needs to go in and make sure everything is cleaned up.

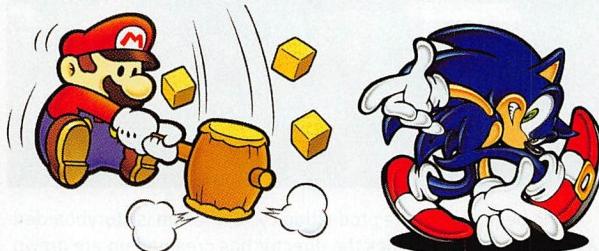
All this and more goes into every image. Even more impressive is the creation of the CG actors. I was enamored with the skill and craft that went into each character's construction, the way the artists were able to invest emotion and such intricate movement in their creations. The artists themselves have to be actors: depending on the emotion they want to convey in a particular scene, the artists contort their faces in a mirror as they move the slide rules in a computer program to manipulate points on the CG character's face. Each movement is delicately intricate, from the nostrils to the gums to the eyelids.

Watching a scene come together, I could only imagine what an amazing feeling it must be to see your imagination given shape on film. When I asked senior animator Andy Jones what the best part of working on this potentially archetypal project was, he says, "To create life." **GR**

Written by Brady Fiechter

SUPER SONIC BROTHERS?

Nintendo and Sega - together?! Heck no! But that's what the New York Times reported in an article that ran in January. According to the Times, Nintendo was on the verge of buying Sega for \$2 billion, and cited "executives close to the negotiations" in Japan who claimed the two video game giants had been having discussions for some time. Sega and Nintendo, however, strongly deny that such a buy-out could occur and have even called the claims outright lies. When contacted, a Sega of America spokesperson said that they were asked not to comment on the matter since the rumor originated in Japan, and Sega's Japanese web site has even posted a notice saying the merger claims are false. Additional elements, such as Sega's ties with Microsoft and Sega's previously announced plans to become the world's leading software publisher, lend further doubt to the Times' claims. Following the Times' article, Sega's stock rose by 100 yen even though the chances of a Sega-Nintendo union are about as good as the Chargers going to the Superbowl.



OPEN UP AND SAY EAAA

Last December, Microsoft's Xbox group officially announced that Electronic Arts is an Xbox developer, and, in fact, have been working with the Xbox team since the very beginning—EA were one of the first to receive Xbox development kits. EA now has 500 kits and will have 10 titles ready for Xbox's launch.

In a one-on-one phone conversation with Microsoft's Xbox general manager, J Allard, GR asked why they waited until the end of 2000 to make the announcement. Allard replied, "Because we wanted to give a gift to the industry. EA's been there since the very beginning and have been advisors...telling what pitfalls to avoid. One thing that they pushed us really hard on were the hard drive and the broadband. The future is online. We agree. We'll make some great stuff happen together." When asked about signing Squaresoft, he said, "C'mon Pooch, this is about EA."

In other Xbox-related news, Bill Gates is rumored to be showing off the Xbox hardware and controller during his opening keynote speech at the Winter CES, in Las Vegas, January 6 - 9, 2001. Perhaps he will also announce the signing of Square?



IN OTHER NEWS...

Rumors from the Nintendo camp say Rare's fantastic-looking Dinosaur Planet will get pushed off the N64 and onto Gamecube...

Other rumors say the Gamecube could be delayed until 2002, which might be better than going head-to-head with Microsoft...

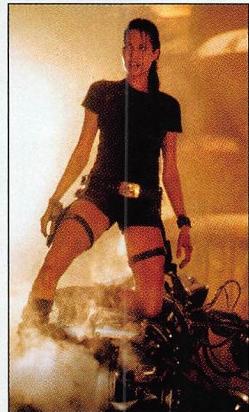
On the other hand, some 24 million Game Boy Advance units should be available when the machine launches in a few months. No botched launch here!

The WonderSwan Color hit Japan in late 2000 and sold an amazing 300,000 units on the first day. Not really surprising with Final Fantasy along for the ride...

Prepare to enter The Matrix again.

Angelina mas fina

Tomb Raider fans worldwide are anxiously awaiting the release of the TR motion picture. And judging by the previews we're not going to be disappointed. Angelina says the Lara role is the closest thing she's ever played to herself and judging by the photo's we couldn't agree more.



ONI...

The futuristic adventure of Rockstar's Oni is jumping from the PS2 to the comic book rack courtesy of Dark Horse Comics. The three-issue mini-series will follow the story of Konoko, the game's sexy special agent, who is on a mission to infiltrate the criminal organization Syndicate and take them down, along with other-worldly beings that prove even more dangerous. Judging from the preview work we've seen, it looks like the comic should faithfully recreate the dark world and action of the game well. Written by Dave Land and penciled by Sunny Lee, Oni should be available now.



Though there's no new news on a video game, the Wachowski brothers are reportedly working on an anime based on their hit film...



Dude, where's my car? Sega's PR power duo rings in the New Year!

YEA, CAN YOU SUPER 78 SIZE IT FOR ME?

In the suburb of West Los Angeles more affectionately known worldwide as Hollywood lies one of the 10 busiest intersections in all of Southern California—the corner of Highland and Sunset. The area is dotted with fast food joints, liquor stores, Hollywood High School, film and TV production offices, tourist souvenir shops and sleazy motels.

One block south of the intersection is a neo-trendy, pseudo-upscale American food joint, called Hampton's, where lower-rung TV and film industry types grab a thick, juicy, cheese-laden burger, a Coke and a basket of fries. Behind the building, in your typical metropolis alleyway, is an unassuming, unmarked front door leading to what upon first impression is the Hampton's garage. Standing in the litter- and graffiti-filled alleyway, I felt like I was at the door of some mysterious, underground, Hollywood clubhouse and I needed to know the secret knock and password to get in.

Once inside, the interior added to the clubhouse feeling, belying the exterior with a cool, clean, open, triangular wooden roof-beam decor. This is the clubhouse and 3D visual effects world of co-owners Dina Benadon and Brent Young and their posse at Super 78—the company honored with the job of providing Sega with a number of CG cutscenes and effects for the upcoming Dreamcast title Sonic Adventure 2.

Having previously produced the in-game CG work for Nspace's PSX title Danger Girl, Super 78's reputation now precedes them. In regards to how they got the rare nod to work on an in-house Sega title, Dina Benadon explains, "They actually called us. They had heard of us through Nspace, so it was word of mouth. That's one thing about Sega that I really respect. They were willing to take that risk with us, but they also had seen our work."

Super 78 has been working on visuals for the SA2 game since last August and will have completed the project by the end of January 2001. The work from Sega comes at a great time in the industry as first-class, broadcast-quality, CG graphics become more sought out for the more sophisticated machines.

"There's going to be a lot of art demands that the developers thought that they could handle but maybe want to hand off to an art house that specifically deals in artwork, specifically deals with the eye or modeling and lighting," says Brent Young.

Benadon and Young have been working together for seven years, the last four as the entity that is Super 78. The pair came from an Academy Award-winning graphics production company called Rhythm & Hues, where they worked alongside Oddworld's Lorne Lanning and Sherry McKenna, producing ride films for amusement parks. After leaving R&H, Benadon and Young founded Super 78 and produced a BMX feature film as well as other 3D graphics

intensive productions.

Once on their own, they immediately began crafting a video game-based television show called Station Alpha, which has since been sold to Sony Pictures and is in development at The Game Show Network. Station Alpha covers the entire realm of gaming and gaming culture and Super 78 has some cutting edge ideas they're trying to implement. For the show, the company created an original CG character, named Lil' P.K., that will go into video games, using the assets provided by the developers.

"One of the segments that we actually took out of Station Alpha was the EverQuest segment," says Benadon. "We took it out and set it aside because we weren't able to work with the people there and work with them to develop this. But basically, it's a real world meets virtual world where we would actually send a camera crew into EverQuest and follow a character and have a weekly series where we could follow a character and see what its adventures are like."

One of the goals of Benadon and Young is to continue to close the gap between Hollywood and the video-game industry. To this extent, they sought after and acquired some of the hottest up-and-

coming entertainment industry talent available. They recently hired producer Siouxsie Alarcon who's worked at E! Entertainment Television and Universal MCA Feature Films, and art director Vinny "The Pencil" Delay, a former comic book artist who's turned his talents to storyboard such works as the films "Breakers" and "Three Kings" and the TV shows "E.R.," "Everybody Loves Raymond," and Disney's "Gepetto." Super 78 is loaded with talent as their lightning fast director of animation, Steve "Stevie Z" Ziolkowski, is the person responsible for

the animation for the Coca-Cola polar bears commercials and the animation for the "Star Trek: The Adventure" attraction at the Las Vegas Hilton. Rounding out the company are CGI artist Andy Dill, and motion graphics and effects artist simply named Manny.

With the diligence of the company's founders to constantly seek out more creative opportunities, the future for Super 78 looks bright. After they deliver SA2 to Sega, the company will continue working on Station Alpha, two animated television shows, theme park projects, commercial production projects, music videos and more video game industry work. The laid-back atmosphere and personality of the group at Super 78 definitely fits the clubhouse settings. As I neared the end of my visit, I almost felt part of the club, but then got wind of an initiation ritual of sorts that one would need to partake in to be official: a Super 78 party featuring Red Bull Vodkas. Sounds potent. Where do I sign up? **GR**

Written by Michael Puccini



MONTHLY CHARTS PROVIDED BY
NPD DATA TRACKING SERVICES

database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND HANDHELD GAME STATISTICS

top ten selling playstation 2 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 2, 2000

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. MADDEN NFL 2001 | EA | 6. MIDNIGHT CLUB | ROCKSTAR |
| 2. SSX | EA | 7. NASCAR 2001 | EA |
| 3. FIFA 2001 | EA | 8. SMUGGLER'S RUN | ROCKSTAR |
| 4. TEKKEN TAG TOUR. | NAMCO | 9. READY2RUMBLE 2 | MIDWAY |
| 5. NHL 2001 | EA | 10. SUMMONER | THQ |



top ten selling playstation titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 2, 2000

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. WWF SMACKDOWN 2 | THQ | 6. SPEC OPS | TAKE2INTERACTIVE |
| 2. T. HAWK PRO SKATER 2 | ACTIVISION | 7. ACTION BASS | TAKE2INTERACTIVE |
| 3. FINAL FANTASY IX | SQUARE | 8. MADDEN NFL 2001 | EA |
| 4. DRIVER 2 | GT INTERACTIVE | 9. CRASH BASH | SONY |
| 5. T. HAWK PRO SKATER | ACTIVISION | 10. MORT THE CHICKEN | CRAVE |

top ten selling nintendo 64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 2, 2000

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. ZELDA MM | NINTENDO | 6. HEY YOU PIKACHU! | NINTENDO |
| 2. WWF NO MERCY | THQ | 7. MARIO TENNIS | NINTENDO |
| 3. BANJO-TOOIE | NINTENDO | 8. MADDEN NFL 2001 | EA |
| 4. T.W.I.N.E. | EA | 9. RUGRATS IN PARIS | THQ |
| 5. T. HAWK PRO SKATER | ACTIVISION | 10. NFL BLITZ 2001 | MIDWAY |



top ten selling dreamcast titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 2, 2000

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. SHENMUE | SEGA | 6. SONIC ADVENTURE | SEGA |
| 2. NBA 2K1 | SEGA | 7. SKIES OF ARCADIA | SEGA |
| 3. NFL 2K1 | SEGA | 8. T. HAWK PRO SKATER | CRAVE |
| 4. CRAZY TAXI | SEGA | 9. WWF ROYAL RUMBLE | THQ |
| 5. T. HAWK PRO SKATER 2 | ACTIVISION | 10. READY2RUMBLE 2 | MIDWAY |

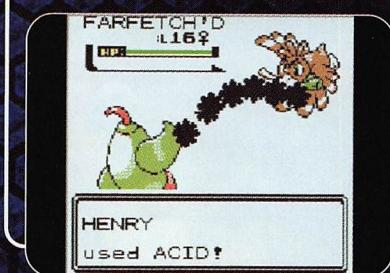
top ten selling gameboy color titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 2, 2000

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. POKÉMON GOLD | NINTENDO | 6. POWER PUFF GIRLS | NINTENDO |
| 2. POKÉMON SILVER | NINTENDO | 7. 102 DALMATIANS | NINTENDO |
| 3. DONKEY KONG COUNTRY | NINTENDO | 8. GRINCH | ACTIVISION |
| 4. T.HAWK PRO SKATER 2 | ACTIVISION | 9. SUPER MARIO DLX. | NINTENDO |
| 5. RUGRATS IN PARIS | NINTENDO | 10. BUZZ LIGHTYEAR | HASBRO |



top ten selling overall console titles



*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 2, 2000

1. POKÉMON GOLD-GB
2. POKÉMON SILVER-GB
3. WWF SMACKDOWN 2-PS
4. T.HAWK PRO SKATER 2-PS
5. FINAL FANTASY IX-PS

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| NINTENDO | 6. DRIVER 2-PS | ACTIVISION |
| NINTENDO | 7. DONKEY KONG COUNTRY-GBC | NINTENDO |
| THQ | 8. ZELDA MM-N64 | NINTENDO |
| ACTIVISION | 9. WWF NO MERCY-N64 | THQ |
| SQUARE | 10. T.HAWK PRO SKATER 2-GBC | ACTIVISION |

gamers' republic top ten games

* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH DECEMBER 23, 2000

d. halverson

1. ATV OFFROAD FURY PS2
2. MAJORA'S MASK N64
3. SIN & PUNISHMENT N64
4. JET GRIND RADIO DC
5. DAYTONA USA 2001 DC
6. PHANTASY STAR O. DC
7. GOEMON PS2
8. GRANDIA II DC
9. LUNAR 2 EBC PS
10. SILPHEED TLP PS2

b. siechler

1. KLONOA PS2
2. T.W.I.N.E. N64
3. SIN & PUNISHMENT N64
4. MEGA MAN X5 PS2
5. SKIES OF ARCADIA DC
6. RADIANT SILVERGUN SAT
7. TR: CHRONICLES DC
8. SFIII: 3rd STRIKE DC
9. PERFECT DARK N64
10. GUILTY GEAR X DC

milee habbs

1. FINAL FANTASY IX PS
2. THE BOUNCER PS2
3. PHANTASY STAR O. DC
4. RADIANT SILVERGUN SAT
5. SAMBA VER. 2000 DC
6. FIFA 2001 (IMPORT) PS2
7. GRANDIA II DC
8. GRAN TURISMO 3 PS2
9. DAYTONA USA 2001 DC
10. PAPER MARIO N64

r. stratton

1. T HAWKS PRO SKTR 2 PS
2. SAMBA DE AMIGO DC
3. DISNEY DANCE RAVE PS
4. WWF NO MERCY N64
5. ADV COOKIE & CRM PS2
6. NFL 2K1 DC
7. SHENMUE DC
8. UFC DC
9. TRES. OF THE DEEP PS
10. GF 3RD REMIX PS2

poochin

1. ESPN NBA2Night PS2
2. MADDEN 2001 PS2
3. NBA LIVE 2001 PS2
4. ZELDA: MM N64
5. FIFA 2001 PS2
6. TONY HAWK 2 DC
7. JET GRIND RADIO DC
8. T.W.I.N.E. N64
9. MARIO PARTY 3 N64
10. POKÉMON SILVER GBC

nelson lui

1. FINAL FANTASY IX PS
2. SIN & PUNISHMENT N64
3. TALES OF ETERNIA DC
4. GUILTY GEAR X DC
5. GRAN TURISMO 3 PS2
6. TR: CHRONICLES PC
7. WWF NO MERCY N64
8. MARIO PARTY 3 N64
9. SAKURA TAISEN 2 DC
10. CAPCOM VS. SNK DC

bob elmqvist

1. GIANTS PC
2. MOTO GP PS2
3. FINAL FANTASY IX PS
4. N.O.L.F. PC
5. SSX SNOWBOARDING PS2
6. TIMESPLITTERS PS2
7. PERFECT DARK N64
8. DELTA FORCE L.W. PC
9. HITMAN PC
10. QUAKE III DC

c hoffman

Is she - my ancestress?

1. SHADOW OF DESTINY PS2
2. ZONE OF THE ENDERS PS2
3. MEGA MAN X5 PS
4. LUNAR 2 PS
5. SIN & PUNISHMENT N64
6. FINAL FANTASY IX PS
7. WWF NO MERCY N64
8. CAPCOM VS. SNK DC
9. GRAN TURISMO 3 PS2
10. GUILTY GEAR X DC

KLONOA 2 LUNATEA'S VEIL

BY BRADY FIECHTER

*Namco responds to the buzz surrounding its latest platforming superstar
By granting us the sequel we've all been begging for*

As I play an early version of Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil to its abrupt conclusion for the fourth time in a row, more than willing to go another four plays and very close to precipitating a nasty tussle to keep the game permanently in my possession, the patiently protective Namco representative looking over my shoulder asks, "So do you think this is truly a second-generation PlayStation 2 game?" Given that I won't shut up about how amazing and awesome and gorgeous and fun and incredible and glorious the game is (how hopelessly happy am I that one of the most maddeningly overlooked gems on the PlayStation has finally gotten a sequel and is easily the best game so far on PlayStation 2), my answer comes as a bit of a surprise, even to me: "No, I don't. Nope, definitely first generation." Say what?!

After all that praise, every bit of it genuine, an explanation is in order. "You see," I cautiously say, preparing a safe answer that will appease those overly sensitive types, "If you want to talk next next-level stuff, the edges on the cliffs could use a bit more polygons, and a bit more environmental density would scream PS2 power. Also, Klonoa's ear has a sharp edge, and more polygons would make that character even better." Say what?

For a moment there, I stumble into the critic trap, pulling out the technical protractor and magnifying glass, scrutinizing and examining where neither is necessary. I am immediately enamored of a game that is far, far from completion, and yet I find myself looking for blemishes on a marvelous canvas, poisoned by the fallout from the Sony hype factory in meltdown: games just aren't supposed to look like games any more, right?

Shame on me for even going there, for temporarily forgetting about one of the most important components to great games, the qualities that diminish the really technical stuff, the same qualities that capture me the instant I play Klonoa 2: artistry and visual invention and a mastery of design.

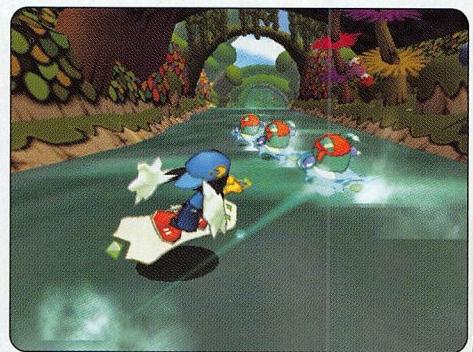
In many ways, all three go hand in hand,

working as one to complete the experience. And there's just something so right, so unique and magical and delightful about Klonoa 2. It's a complete extension of the first game, taking everything that made it glow and plugging it into a brand new source of creative energy.

Like in the first game, Klonoa 2 takes place in a dream world, where spirits rule and visions from the deepest corners of people's minds shape reality. Namco has fully cultivated this surreal theme, creating a place that is given life through the power of its fantastical images. Curious creatures pop up from all corners, proportioned in a way that could only seem natural in the strangest and wildest depths of the imagination. Some of them engage you in conversation, speaking in high-pitched chirps and squeaks. It's delightful to listen to this dream language as the story unfolds.

Many of the creatures in the game are so round and puffed up that they look on the verge of fatally bursting. This happens to be a good thing for Klonoa, the decide-for-yourself-what-it-is hero (cat/skunk/mystical being?) who can grab onto the enemy's bouncy frame and spring off it for a double jump or discard it as a projectile attack to destroy objects and other enemies that wait in all corners of the screen. The tasks necessary to tackle the many obstacles in Klonoa 2 require a lot of jumping, throwing, swinging and bouncing. There are little puzzles to solve, timing sequences to master, inhabitants to avoid, crevasses to leap—all classic stuff, all endlessly entertaining. Simplistic, two-button control is at the center of the masterfully engaging gameplay. Namco has taken some of the most traditional and well-worn ideas and raised them to a level of high reward.

As I play Klonoa 2, I'm struck by just how flowing the game is, the way every little movement and path becomes an exciting moment. Because the game is contained on a set, restricted course—call it 2D, if you





like—the camera is allowed to frame the action with an uncommonly kinetic dynamic that is at times thrilling, and the screen is constantly shifting and rotating, opening up distant sections of a level as Klonoa races along. One of the big kicks is seeing a spot in the level, way off in the distance, knowing that eventually you'll wind up there as the world twists and turns.

Ultimately, getting to far-off areas means launching out of a cannon-like device at several points. It's amazing to watch Klonoa blast into a stormy sky, trees and cliffs and rocks and stormy sea all around, with enemies zooming in and out of the screen.

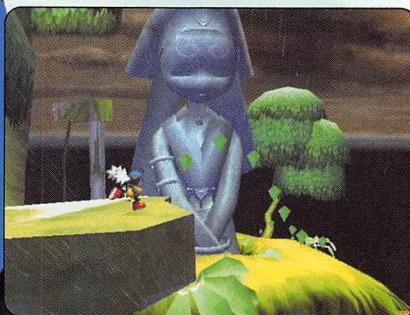
There is a wealth of visual treasure in Klonoa 2, and some of the tiniest details add so much to the game's effect: puddles forming from melting ice, trees straining in a storm and snapping from a lightning strike, a subtle ripple of

energy from Klonoa's ring punch. On a grander scale are such marvelous touches like the long line of waterfalls that spill out of cracks in towering cavern walls, the swirling vortex and violent skies dumping torrents of rain, the tumultuous sea rising and falling and crashing against the rocks, spitting up sheets of surf.

You know, on second thought, Klonoa 2 is a second-generation PlayStation 2 game. As a matter of fact, go back and compare it to the original PSX gem and you won't be able to deny just how far we really have come in such a short time. For now, games like Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil are all the hype we need to feel that gaming is better than it has ever been. **GR**



AN INTERVIEW WITH TSUYOSHI KOBAYASHI



Gamers' Republic: Does Klonoa 2 take place in the same world the original did?

Tsuyoshi Kobayashi: No, it does not. Klonoa 2 takes place in a completely different world called "Lunatea." Lunatea is composed of four different kingdoms: "The Kingdom of Calm" is a place where many people live peacefully; on the other hand, "The Kingdom of Anger" is a place where people fight all year round, "The Kingdom of Merriment" is a place where the whole kingdom is one big amusement park, and "The Kingdom of Hesitation" is a place where people are always thinking about the future and past.

GR: Klonoa had brilliant CG. Will Klonoa 2's cinemas be real time or CG?

TK: There will be no CG this time. All scenes will be in real time.

GR: Please explain the story.

TK: Klonoa meets two new characters, Lolo and Popka, as he starts his journey in the world of Lunatea. I cannot say at this point why Klonoa is on this journey, or what kind of impressions/surprises are waiting for him, but I can tell you that our team has done our best to ensure players will enjoy this as much as the last story. Our main goal was to make this game a "dramatic action game" which is a combination of action and a dramatic storyline.

GR: What new play mechanics does Klonoa have?

TK: In Klonoa 2, we have added a new game feature that will enable the player to control Klonoa by pressing the "action" button.

This button will allow Klonoa the ability to do some magnificent moves. The more the player becomes used to this control, the more enjoyable the game will be. The basic concept of this game was, "Let's try to create an action game with a lot of surprises by using the graphics abilities of PS2." One point we really tried hard to stress was to make the player feel that he/she is controlling Klonoa at all times, even when there is a camera angle change during gameplay. This is why we added the new action button feature. Basically, the simple gameplay of using the directional pad plus two other buttons is the same. Only this new action button has been added. The stage where Klonoa moves forward on a float board is a point where the player can have an entirely new experience.

GR: Is Klonoa 2 similar to the first game, or are you trying to create an entirely different experience?

TK: I can say that it is a powered-up version of the last. Of course, there are many new elements and surprises due to the new hardware ability, so I think the player can have an entirely different experience.

GR: Did you ever consider designing Klonoa 2 as a free-roaming 3D platformer?

TK: Yes, I have. But I wanted to make the game as an action game so that it is for everyone, easy-to-play, and really fun to play.

GR: How many members from the original design team are working on this sequel?

TK: Probably around 10 out of 50 are from the original Klonoa.

GR: Are you pleased with the PlayStation

KLONOA 2's development environments? Have you run into any problems?

TK: Working on a new hardware system always has some problems. Since we are able to do stuff which was impossible to do on the old system, we are much happier.

GR: It must be enjoyable working on new hardware, being able to try new things with your design ideas?

TK: Yes, it is. Since we were able to create the backgrounds very precisely this time, it actually helped us to add many great ideas to the gameplay. The new action button and float board are part of these new ideas. We have also tried to use some ideas on the actual characters as well. The technology we used in Klonoa 2 is called "Klonoa Filter," and this is an entirely new technology to illustrate 3D graphics. This technology will enable us to use as much color as possible to highlight the character in the 3D world, and it will also light the character very nicely. The best part about this technology is that since it outlines the characters, it really helps them stand out.

GR: Was it your intention from the start to wait until new hardware came out to do a sequel?

TK: No, it was not.

GR: Is there any thought of making Klonoa for Dreamcast?

TK: No, not at this point.

GR: Is Klonoa 2 similar to the first game in length?

TK: We have increased the number of stages and lengthened the story from the original Klonoa. It will be longer.

GR: With the new music capabilities, do you plan on doing anything special with the game's sound?

TK: I'm afraid I cannot tell you at this point.

GR: What about Klonoa 2 are you most proud of?

TK: This game is suitable for everyone.

GR: Will any of the characters be returning from the first game?

TK: There are some enemy characters from the first Klonoa.

GR: Were you able to use more dynamic camera work this time around?

TK: I think the player will enjoy what we accomplished with the new camera work. Our goal was to make a cool action game by using dynamic camera angles. To make the camera work more dynamic, our team worked hard to create deep backgrounds.

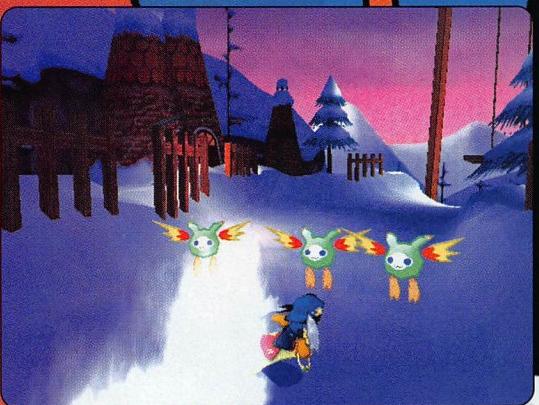
GR: Have you designed the game considering the user base for the PS2 is somewhat older and more versed in gaming?

TK: Yes, we actually considered that part very much this time. For example, Klonoa himself has grown a little bit compared to the original. He is taller and has an older voice. Since Klonoa has grown, we decided to change the world as well. You will probably notice that the world seems less childish when compared to the original version. As for the gameplay, we have tried to make it so that almost everyone can enjoy playing this game.

GR: Is it too soon to already be thinking about Klonoa 3?

TK: Yes, I can only think about completing Klonoa 2 at this point.

GR



GAMERS' REPUBLIC

2000 YEAR IN REVIEW

They say time flies when you're having fun, and this year they couldn't have been more on the money. (By the way, does anyone know who "they" are?) The year 2000 marked Sega's best year since '94's Genesis surge, as the Dreamcast consistently churned out hit after hit. Beginning with Rayman 2, Berserk, Kain 2, and Super Magnetic Neo, followed by Fur Fighters, MDK 2, and Code Veronica, Sega inserted the exclamation point with Shenmue, Jet Grind, Grandia II, and Skies of Arca-

dia—along with announcements for 2001 that will turn the online gaming world on its ear. The last cart muncher had a solid year, too, capped off by Link himself. The possibility that Dinosaur Planet and Eternal Darkness may be scrapped is unfortunate, but Conker and Sin and Punishment should leave the N64's legacy intact. Next year? The emergence of more PS2 games like ATV Offroad Fury and Bouncer, Game Boy Advance, Gamecube (we hope) and Xbox. Time—fly faster!

|||| ACTION // GAME OF THE YEAR



1. MDK 2 Hardcore gamers got their fill and then some in 2000 beginning with MDK 2. Bioware managed to design a game wrapped around three completely different characters and make each equally fun to play. It takes a master gamer to see it all the way through—especially having to jump with the R trigger—but it's an unforgettable journey.



2. berserk Hack and slash rose to new levels, gushed blood, and told a story. Ah, progress.



3. red dog Argonaut's Dreamcast sleeper rocked our world, but got no love from publisher Crave.

Exit / Enter
Entrance

ACTION // PLATEFORM GAME OF THE YEAR



1. rayman 2 As close to a living, breathing video game as you will ever find, Michael Ancel's brilliant fantasy worlds seemed to come alive as Rayman and his Globox pals battled the evil pirates—through brilliantly produced scenarios—fighting for their freedom. Pouring the magic of Rayman's 2D, hand-drawn splendor into 3D was a tall order, but Ubi Soft made it happen.



2. silhouette mirage

Treasure's exulted platformer got its day in the sun, courtesy of WD.



3. spr magnetic neo

2000's gamer's game made your brain bleed, but it was worth it.

ACTION // RPG GAME OF THE YEAR



1. vagrant story It's surprising that Vagrant Story did not cause as big a stir as Metal Gear Solid. This excruciatingly well conceived game excelled in every vital aspect, making it one of Square's very best efforts to date. Stunning graphics, brilliant gameplay, and perfect sound and music made Vagrant Story an absolute stunner.



2. legend of mana

A beautiful, hand-drawn, cooperative, fantasy adventure.



3. valkyrie profile

This refreshing dose of 2D from Enix featured a great battle system.

/ADVENTURE// GAME OF THE YEAR



1. *Zelda: majora's mask*

Even without direct involvement from Miyamoto, Majora's Mask proved that there are people at Nintendo who understand proper game design. Very nearly as good as Ocarina of Time, Link's last N64 outing was simply superb, with the same sort of inspired brilliance that marks Nintendo's best.



2. *re code veronica*

Splendid visuals, creepy atmosphere, completely immersing.



3. *Fur fighters*

Acclaim took us places we'd never been with critters we'll never forget.

/FPS// GAME OF THE YEAR



1. *Perfect dark*

The sequel to GoldenEye packed enough features to keep the game charged for months. From the brilliant level design and superb character animations to the fierce action and awesome settings, Perfect Dark was everything Rare promised it would be. Those death animations and cries of pain were very un-Nintendo.



2. *t.w.i.n.e.*

Inspired by GoldenEye, and just as good.



3. *Medal of honor 2*

Pretend everyone in the game is Hitler and fill 'em full of holes.

RPG // GAME OF THE YEAR



1. FFI Square has a gift for filling the screen with life, and Final Fantasy IX became a place we could completely lose ourselves in. The return to traditional magic and fantasy brought a warmth and charm and wonder to the game that was missing from the last two Final Fantasy adventures. Powerful and beautiful, here was an RPG masterpiece.



2. grandia II GameArts' grand sequel set the stage for the next generation of role playing.



3. Shies of Arcadia Sega's airborne epic, with its expressive characters, is unforgettable.

STRATEGY // GAME OF THE YEAR



1. Ogre Battle 64 The N64 doesn't get many strategy titles, which amplifies the excellence of Ogre Battle 64. From the supremely talented minds at Quest, this beautiful, deep, and very well constructed game even made PS owners, who've been privy to Tactics Ogre and Final Fantasy Tactics, jealous.



2. front mission 3 The best mech strategy game ever made? By a long shot.



3. Kessen Koei goes nuts with the PS2's power and has a ball in their favored genre.

SHOOTING GAME OF THE YEAR



1. *Silpheed* The true space shooter returned in 2000 (well, almost) and remains the only game of its kind for a modern console—a sickening statistic. Although *Silpheed* didn't hit stores until early January due to ridiculous delays beyond Working Design's control, we bent the rules a little to give it the honor *Treasure*, GameArts, and WD deserve.



2. *Banqiao* Some would call this *Treasure* delight better than *Silpheed*.



3. *Gradius 3 & 4* Oh, was this game challenging! Classic fun, too.

PUZZLE GAME OF THE YEAR



1. *Super Bust-a-Move*

Okay, so *Super Bust-a-Move* might not be the most innovative puzzle game ever, but when the game is this good to begin with, does it matter? Taito's bubble busting is the best puzzle concept since *Tetris*. And how can you not like a game where one of the characters vomits every time a combo is scored against him?



2. *ChuChu Rocket* A most original game of collect the mice.



3. *Pokemon PZL League* The *Tetris* influence continues.

/FIGHTING// GAME OF THE YEAR



1. Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike

The Street Fighter series doesn't innovate much, but somehow each new version just seems that much better. Credit part of this to new, exquisite animations, characters and gorgeous hand-drawn backdrops. No 2D fighting series has ever reached this level of precision and polish.



2. Tekken 3

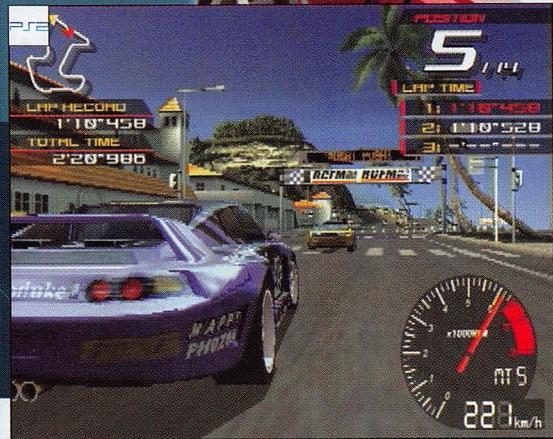
Think Tekken III with incendiary visuals. Those models are just too sweet.



3. Capcom vs. SNK

Capcom fighters versus SNK fighters in gorgeous 2D settings.

/RACING// GAME OF THE YEAR



1. Ridge Racer V

Namco distilled the best elements from their Ridge Racer series and unleashed them in one of the most visually arresting racing games of all time. Absolutely perfect control and best visual presentation the PS2 has yet seen made this an exhilarating Ridge Racer experience.



2. Moto GP Poetry in motion. Somewhere it's etched in stone—Namco is the king of racing.



2. Terra Racer 355 The learning curve is intimidating, but the feeling of competition is so rewarding.

RACING // OFF ROAD GAME OF THE YEAR



1. test drive v-rally Infogrames' incredible Melbourne House gave us the pinnacle of rally racing, by combining intense course design, realistic weather, great physics, and convincing headlight effects with an excellent soundtrack. Together with its intuitive control and deep menus, VR set the stage for the next evolution of the genre.



KART // RACING GAME OF THE YEAR



1. space race The Dreamcast fashion trend of 2000—rendering polygons into three-dimensional toons—was a huge hit. But aside from its exceptional visuals and comic flare, Infogrames' Space Race was all about the weapons, and wasn't afraid to say so. Knowing when to jetison from under falling pianos and anvils, and when to use your own bag of tricks was the name of the game—and it worked.



2. 4x4 evolution Linking Mac, PC, and DC, Terminal Reality raised the bar online.



2. excitebike 64

The turbo-based gameplay bit, but everything else was solid gold.



2. wacky racers It was Wacky alright. It was also fun and drop-dead gorgeous.



3. speed punks

A solid engine and hip little characters propel the punks into the number three spot.

ALTERNATIVE DRIVING GAME OF THE YEAR



1. crazytaxi Crazy Taxi took us all back to the day when playing games wasn't about seeing the ending and saving the world, but about racking up a high score and just having fun. Burning rubber like a maniac through the streets of Sega's virtual city to score massive fares set new precedents for arcade-style driving excitement.



2. midnite club

Everyone's a macho man in Angel Studios' ultimate free-for-all.



3. smugglers run

Crazy Five-O let us see forever and go absolutely bonkers.

BEST WRESTLING GAME OF THE YEAR



1. WWF no mercy Aki's fantastic engine that has powered so many great wrestling games made an awesome return this year with No Mercy. If you saw it on WWF TV, chances are you can do it in this game, including guest ref matches and iron man bouts. The championship story modes are easily the best ever.



2. Smackdown!

More modes than any other wrestling game ever.



3. Smackdown!

The only PlayStation wrestling game better than this is the sequel.

/// BEST // ALTERNATIVE GAME OF THE YEAR



1. Seaman Almost more surprising than the game itself is that Sega actually brought it out here. And not only that, they did a damn good job, hiring Leonard Nimoy to narrate the game, and keeping Seaman's wry and rude temperament fully intact. The voice recognition technology didn't always work, but the idea did.



2. Incredibles Crisis
Hilarious, weird, and gobs of fun.

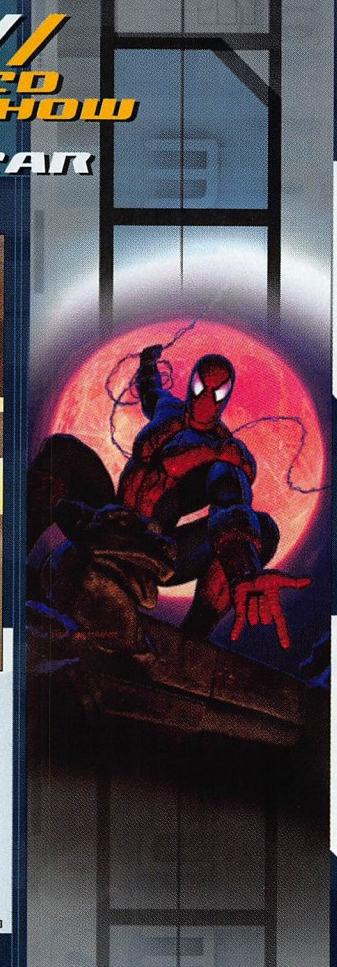


2. RPG Maker The only game where you can make knights go on a quest to find skin mags.

/// BEST // GAME BASED ON A MOVIE, TV SHOW OR COMIC // GAME OF THE YEAR



1. Spider-Man Swinging through New York, climbing walls, throwing baddies around with webbing, fighting super-villains...Spider-Man recreated the action of the comic book perfectly. Good scripting and voice-overs add to the presentation, but the sheer variety and arcade-style gameplay make Spider-Man a game that's fun to play again and again. Even the N64 version turned out good.



2. max steel Treyarch gave Max the game he deserved. Maybe they'll do the Grinch sequel!



3. Spawn in the Demon's Hand McFarlane and had game-play to burn, literally.

/BEST//

MUSIC/RHYTHM

GAME OF THE YEAR



1. space channel 5 Sega's Space Channel made it cool to play music games by combining an alien TV news reporter—the lanky, sexy Ulala—with a shooting theme. Then Sega of America drove the idea home by finding the real-life Ulala and parading her around at E3, making us all drag our tongues like heathens.



2. samba de amigo

Pure addiction, pure inspiration, Sonic Team at its best.



3. bust a groove 2

A lot like the first one—catchy tunes, smooth looks, big fun.

/IMPORT//

GAME OF THE YEAR



1. sin and punishment

Treasure gave us the best Christmas present of all: a beautiful original game for the N64. Combining elements from Gunstar Heroes and Alien Soldier, the game emulates their amazing 2D titles in 3D. The perfect balance of control, story, music, and graphics, S&P is a game we will play forever.



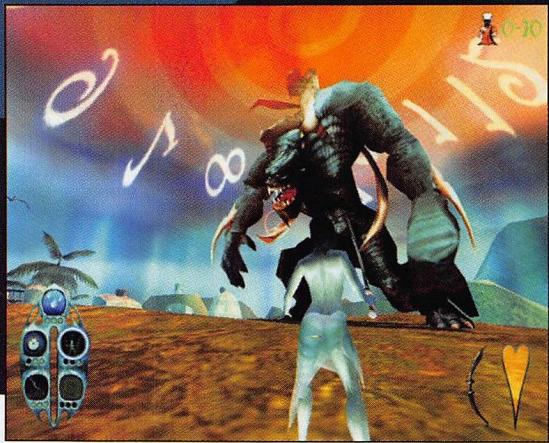
2. guilty gear x Not only does it look amazing, it packs incredible depth and technique.



3. FIST OF THE NORTH-STAR

It spouts, squirts and is the finest PS beat-'em-up ever.

PC GAME OF THE YEAR



1. GIANTS

One of the greatest PC games ever created—Giants exhibits a blend of genre-bending gameplay that stretches from FPS to RTS and everything in between. Add incredible visuals, amazing original character designs, an excellent soundtrack, and a touch of hilarious British humor and - viola! - masterpiece!



1. metal gear solid

qbo Nearly as enjoyable as the PS game, it had the play, if not the looks.



3. blaster master

qbo This one kept us playing for hours on the NES, and it's just as good on GBC.

HANDHELDS

TOP 5 OF 2000



4. dk country **qbo** This port of the SNES classic reminded us of what great design is all about.



2. sacrifice Shiny's best since EWJ redefined the RTS genre.



3. america mcgee's alice

Go ask Alice... You'll be glad you did.



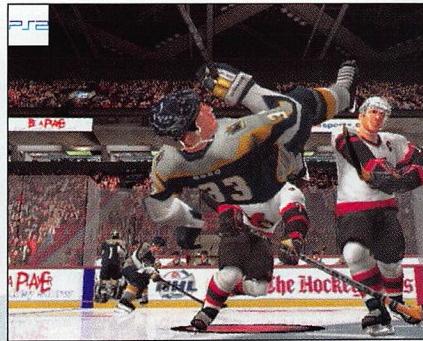
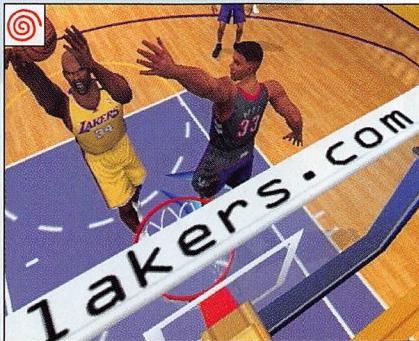
2. metal slug 2

qbo Ah, the poor Neo Geo Pocket. How did it fail with games as good as MS2?



5. wario land 3 **qbo** It's not every day a platform/puzzler like WL3 comes along. Being bad rules!

SPORTS



FOOTBALL GAME OF THE YEAR

NFL 2K1 What could be better than playing one of the best football games online, nationwide? Playing naked!

BASKETBALL GAME OF THE YEAR

NBA 2K1 Another gorgeous online gift, this was one of the "Must Have" games for 2000.

HOCKEY GAME OF THE YEAR

NHL 2001 Not only is the game gorgeous to behold, but the gameplay is EA's finest ever for a Hockey outing.



BASEBALL GAME OF THE YEAR

Triple Play 2001

With new gameplay additions, TP showed why it's the best in the business.

TENNIS GAME OF THE YEAR

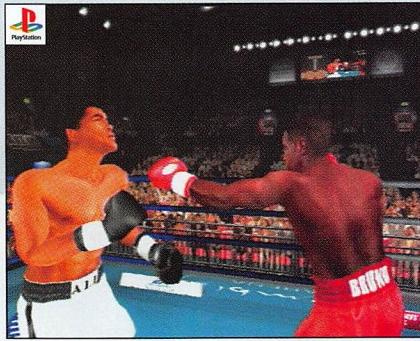
Virtua Tennis

Uncanny graphic realism and great balance, this is by far the best tennis game ever.

SOCcer GAME OF THE YEAR

FIFA 2001

It'll be interesting to see where EA goes from here, as this game is just about perfect.



BOXING GAME OF THE YEAR

Knockout Kings

With a solid presentation, tight gameplay and clean graphics, it KO'd the rest.

NON-SIMULATION SPORTS

1. **Mario Tennis (N64)**
2. **Hot Shots 2 (PS)**
3. **Swing Away Golf (PS2)**

BEST "GOAL!!!" YELL

1. "G-G-G-G-G-G-GOAL!!!" - **FIFA 2001 (PS2)**
2. "GAWLLL!!!" - **Virtua Striker 2 (DC)**
3. "GAH-GAH-GAHLLL!!!" - **Jikk You (PS2)**

**MOST INNOVATIVE NEW GAME**

- 1.** Jet Grind Radio (DC)
- 2.** Seaman (DC)
- 3.** Shenmue (DC)

BEST MUSIC

- 1.** Chrono Cross (PS)
- 2.** Skies of Arcadia (DC)
- 3.** Final Fantasy IX (PS)

**BEST CG SEQUENCES**

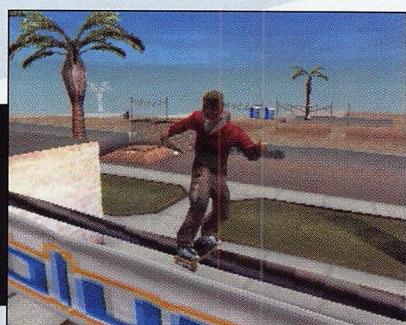
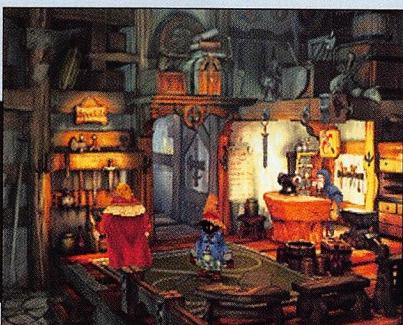
- 1.** Final Fantasy IX (PS)
- 2.** Tomb Raider Chronicles (DC)
- 3.** RE Code: Veronica (DC)

BEST STORY

- 1.** D2 (DC)
- 2.** Vagrant Story (PS)
- 3.** Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Compl. (PS)

BEST NEW CHARACTER

- 1.** Zidane (FF9, PS)
- 2.** Ashley Riot (Vagrant Story, PS)
- 3.** Guts (Sword of the Berserk, DC)

**BEST RETURNING HERO**

- 1.** Link (Zelda: Majora's Mask, N64)
- 2.** Strider Hiryu (Strider 2, PS)
- 3.** Solid Snake (Metal Gear, GBC)

BEST PRODUCER

- 1.** Hironobu Sakaguchi (FF9, PS)
- 2.** Takeshi Miyaji (Grandia II, DC)
- 3.** Chris Hoffman (Mr.T Gets a Job, PS)

BEST EXTREME SPORTS

- 1.** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (Multi)
- 2.** SSX (PS2)
- 3.** Extreme Sports (DC)

**BEST PUBLISHER 2000**

- 1.** Sega
- 2.** Square Electronic Arts LLC
- 3.** Capcom

BEST DEVELOPER

- 1.** Square
- 2.** Game Arts
- 3.** Neversoft

BEST CONSOLE OF 2000

Sega Dreamcast

**BEST ONLINE GAME**

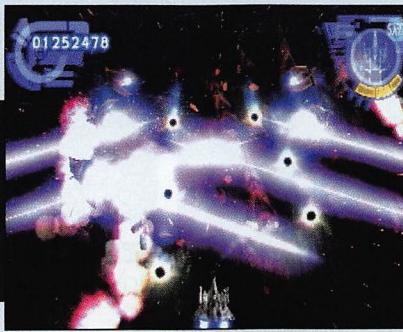
1. NFL2K1 (DC)
2. Quake 3 Arena (DC)
3. 4X4 Evo (DC)

BEST 3D GRAPHICS

1. Shenmue (DC)
2. SSX (PS2)
3. Jet Grind Radio (DC)

BEST 2D GRAPHICS

1. Legend of Mana (PS)
2. Metal Slug 3 (NG)
3. Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike (DC)

**GAME BABE O' THE YEAR**

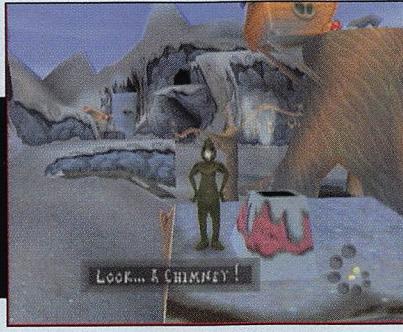
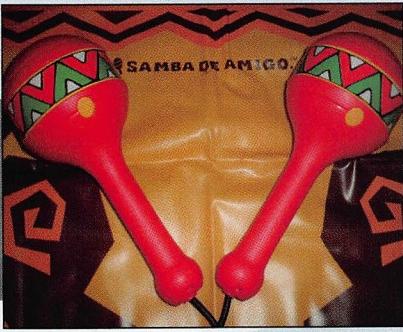
1. Ai Fukami (Ridge Racer V, PS2)
2. Ulala (Space Channel 5, DC)
3. Mai (Capcom vs. SNK, DC)

BEST SPECIAL EFFECTS

1. Silpheed: The Lost Planet (PS2)
2. Grandia II (DC)
3. RE Code: Veronica (DC)

BEST 3D GAME DESIGN

1. Jet Grind Radio (DC)
2. Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
3. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (Multi)

**BEST PERIPHERAL**

1. Samba de Amigo maracas (DC)
2. GameShark for Dreamcast
3. Seaman microphone (DC)

BIGGEST LET DOWN

1. Heinous DC ports
2. PS2 launch
3. Death of SNK U.S.A.

BEST BOX

1. Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Compl. (PS)
2. Grandia II (DC)
3. Silhouette Mirage (PS)

**BEST VOICE ACTING**

1. Soul Reaver: Legacy of Kain (Multi)
2. Sword of the Berserk (DC)
3. Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Compl. (PS)

BEST TV COMMERCIAL

1. Jet Grind Radio (Sega)
2. Excitebike 64 (Nintendo)
3. Evil Dead: Hail to the King (THQ)

BEST PRINT AD

1. Sega GT (Sega)
2. Lunar 2: EBC (Working Designs)
3. Spawn (Capcom)

GAME OF THE YEAR

FINAL FANTASY IX



final fantasy ix (ps) Most of us would like to go so far as naming this one of the best PlayStation games. Certainly the best Final Fantasy on the system, if not in the series. One of us was even moved to tears. So beautiful is Final Fantasy IX's world that it must be viewed as art. When your eyes aren't being nourished, your heart swells for the characters.



RUNNER UP

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK



zelda (n64) As good as Ocarina of Time? Find out for yourself.





PLAYSTATION GAME OF THE YEAR

Final Fantasy IX

What more can we say about Square's latest masterpiece? Um...just go play the game.



RUNNER UP

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2



DREAMCAST GAME OF THE YEAR

Resident Evil Code: Veronica

In a year when the Dreamcast wouldn't stop giving, Resident Evil Code: Veronica crept to the front of the pack with its still-as-good-as-it-gets gameplay, incredible graphics, surprisingly strong story, and overall ability to create an atmosphere that seeps into your bones. As the first game in the series to build its settings with polygons, Code: Veronica lost none of its visual strength.



RUNNER UP

Jet Grind Radio



NINTENDO 64 GAME OF THE YEAR

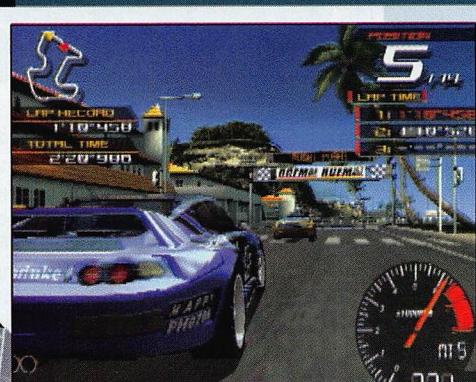
The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask

Two Zeldas in the life of a system? Now we're spoiled. So good, it's almost enough for us to forgive Nintendo for stopping at one Mario game on the N64. Until Gamecube comes along, play Majora's Mask and marvel at what can be achieved in a 3D world of sweeping fantasy.



RUNNER UP

Mario Tennis



PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR

Ridge Racer V

In both Japan and America, Ridge Racer V was many gamers' first taste of what the PS2 was capable of, and what a delicious and tantalizing dish it was. Namco stuck to the basics here, concentrating on delivering an unequivocal version of Ridge Racer. With its classic gameplay and utterly flawless presentation, we were all reminded of why Namco is one of the world's top developers.

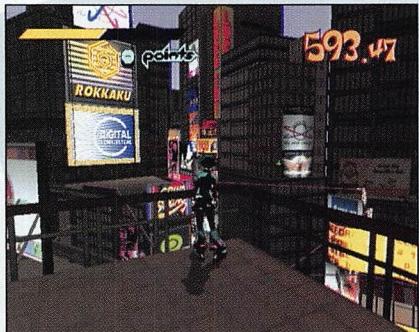


RUNNER UP

Moto GP



Of the eight year-end wrap-ups I've compiled, this one was the most difficult. Let's just say the cutting-room floor is knee deep. Overall, it was a year dominated by Dreamcast but the PlayStation and Nintendo 64 hung tight going out with as much panache as they did coming in. Of all the revelations 2000 wrought, what I am most appreciative of are the strides made in 3D game design. No longer a gimmick, polygonal games are beginning to offer unique new experiences, as my top two picks emphasized so explicitly. They feel so at home in their skin that I took to them as naturally as I do 2D, and that's quite a feat. I'll be ringing in the new year with Phantasy Star Online, ATV Offroad Fury, and The Bouncer, so I can only imagine what I'll be writing here 12 months from now.

**Jet Grind Radio (DC)**

Jet Grind has it all: Fresh concepts, ingenious play mechanics, incredible graphics, depth, loads of extras, and burning hot character designs. What many didn't or don't realize is that it also has gameplay to burn. Not a gimmick, or some rhythmic joke

your sister can play, Jet Grind represents a marked leap in 3D game design, play mechanics, and polygonal technique. I can't wait for the sequel.

**Sin and Punishment
(N64 import)**

Sin and Punishment is one of the greatest, pure, unadulterated action rushes ever devised—a banquet of eye-hand coordination that serious action gamers will consume over and over. It probably won't be the blockbuster that Treasure deserves, but it will surely fill the gap in every hardcore gamer's repertoire that's been absent since their last epic action game. When Nintendo publishes it here later this year, I pray they don't touch a thing.

**Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)**

Not the side story I expected, Majora's Mask marked another full-blown Zelda adventure within two years of Ocarina—a great gift for the Nintendo 64 faithful. And, as promised, if you so desire to explore its depths, it is practically bottomless. The game radiates classic Zelda amidst a dark mischievous theme and a totally original premise.

Grandia II (DC)

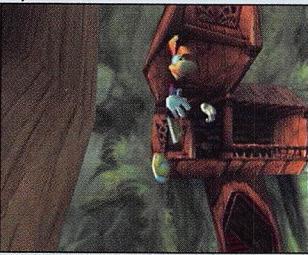
Game Arts came as close to sculpting the perfect RPG as anyone ever has. If they could have played out the game's final cinematics, and with a little less levity, who knows. The combination of Tolkien-esque architecture, inspired character designs, enthralling music, deep story and the best battle system ever equalled this year's best RPG in my book.

Final Fantasy IX (PS)

One of only a few who didn't have FFIX in the top slot, I respect the artistry in the backgrounds, mastery of the CG, and especially the character design, more than words can express. But I expect nothing less from Square, given the size of the game's budget and the number of staff who toiled over it. Square set the standard.

Skies of Arcadia (DC)

Limited only by its battle system (too frequent and too slow), Skies is sheer perfection otherwise. The story is the year's best, the characters are infinitely entertaining and expressive and the 3D worlds are simply magnificent. Skies also boasts one of the year's very best soundtracks. If Sega is looking to launch an RPG franchise, this is the way to do it.

**Moto GP (PS2)**

The pinnacle of road racing sims to date, Moto GP is loved by those with the patience to master it. Unending challenges, pro teams and factory racers, five world-class courses, and save-able replays that defy explanation, Namco's Midas touch found its way back to two-wheeled action with stunning results. Motocross and Rally are still left to conquer; I can dream.

Rayman 2: The Great Escape (DC)

UbiSoft's masterful platformer got a new overworld map and moved like the breeze on Dreamcast. It's a perfectly balanced game with just the right amount of difficulty. Besides being a joy to see and play, Rayman 2 has humor and a lighthearted, almost magical quality about it that leaves an indelible mark on anyone lucky enough to experience it.

Fur Fighters (DC)

Fur Fighters' huge worlds packed more gameplay than many entire games. Whether you were climbing inside a VCR, crawling into a dragon's ear to tickle its tonsils, or negotiating your way through Cape Canaveral, Fur Fighters always kept you guessing. One of the Dreamcast's very best action adventures—epic in every way—it's the DK64 formula perfected.

Sword of the Berserk (DC)

Fighting for my number 10 spot were no less than four games: Super Magnetic Neo, Red Dog, Metal Slug 3, and the one I chose, Berserk. Berserk breathed new life into the category by incorporating real-time cinema into an arcade style action arena with twisted gothic themes, excellent gameplay, bent creature designs, soaring melodies and gallons of blood.

Notice anything interesting about my Top 10 list? Just take a look at all those sequels: Seven of the games are continuations of series introduced as far back as 8-bit, and a handful of others that easily could have landed No. 10 all had a number slapped on the end: MDK2, RR V, Medal of Honor 2, Spyro 3, Parasite Eve 2, Grandia II. It may not be the healthiest course in this transitional period somewhat deprived of compelling originality, but game makers are doing a great job of oiling and fine-tuning the assembly line. And I can't wait for next year and the inevitable durable themes and ideas it will bring, all dressed up in pretty graphics. Take a look at some of the most anticipated games of 2001: MGS2, Soul Reaver 2, Klonoa 2, Soul Calibur 2, Silent Hill 2, Sonic Adventure 2, Munch's Oddysee, GT3, MoH3, Resident Evil 5, Phantasy Star Online. As long as we're having fun, we'll continue to cheer the sequel parade.

**Final Fantasy IX (PS)**

Drawing off a visual style rich in pure fantasy, Square dreamt up a beautiful world for us to escape to. It nourished our thoughts, showed us wondrous sights, breathed life into its colorful characters. In many ways, the game felt like an RPG of old, a FFVI placed in a

**Resident Evil****Code:Veronica (DC)**

The first fully 3D Resident Evil game may not have deviated much from the horror formula, but no matter: this was the best in the series. Resident Evil Code: Veronica is a gripping experience, a game that devilishly seduces you with its

heavy, dark atmosphere and masterful presentation. The artistry and mood were skillfully preserved, despite being stripped of the pre-rendered visuals.

new generation of game making. Its story of friendship and our purpose in a suffocatingly confusing world may have been familiar, but its sublime innocence and subtle strength created an emotional web. Every single quality that feeds my love for video games flowed through this masterpiece.

**Chrono Cross (PS)**

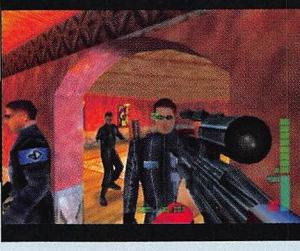
A soaring sequel to one of my favorite 16-bit games. An ethereal beauty danced in the pastoral settings, drawn in a hand-drawn richness and tone. If Final Fantasy IX's character designs took a bit to warm up to, Chrono Cross's were instantly likeable, their warm personality illuminated by superb storytelling. Chrono Cross receives added praise from its deeply original battles.

**Rayman 2 (DC)**

What a magical game this is! The best 3D action/platformer since Mario 64, Rayman 2 retained the visual life and dynamic gameplay that made Rayman on Saturn one of my favorite 2D platformers. An artistic achievement, the game came alive with its vibrant colors and elegant visual strokes.

**Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)**

Zelda: MM created a fairy-tale world that spilled over with imagination and enchantment. Its strange and wonderful sights bore the familiar Zelda aesthetic, but a darker, more subdued tone hung over the game, and it was compelling. Gameplay triumphed. But I love games like this, greatly for their visual treasures. MM opened the door to an intimate, entirely imaginary place, and it felt whole and alive.

**Sin and Punishment (N64 import)**

Brilliant level design makes you forget about the boundaries of the Nintendo 64. Every moment is a kinetic thrill: the frequent boss battles, the tiny safe spots that open inside the storm of explosions and bullets, the constantly shifting patterns in the action. It's rare for a fully polygonal game to capture the energy of, say, a 2D Contra or Gunstar Heroes. This is one of those games.

**Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver (DC)**

Soul Reaver was short, incomplete, had an exasperating ending, and at times felt a little like a jumble of great ideas that didn't quite fit into place. It was also a masterfully atmospheric adventure full of compelling architecture, magnificent creature designs, and a sense of dread that crawled under my skin. I never tired of the block-pushing puzzles and soul stealing. www.gamersrepublic.com

SSX (PS2)

Exhilarating and gorgeous, superbly crafted and richly stylized, this was easily my favorite PlayStation 2 launch game. No game has ever been able to capture the thrill of speeding down a snow-covered mountain like SSX, cutting through knee-deep snow and launching off the lip of a cliff. The use of sound was as skilled as the visual presentation.

Perfect Dark (N64)

Rare's incredibly ambitious Perfect Dark took the Nintendo 64's capabilities to the edge, delivering an FPS universe full of heated encounters and searing visuals. Powered by awesome animation and excellent AI, the enemies darted through the corridors and hallways with a gripping realism, and taking them out was always a delicious rush.

The World Is Not Enough (N64)

Almost as good as Perfect Dark, this thrilling opportunity to assume the role of Mr. Bond was a ceaseless exercise in the delightful school of terrorist removal. The music was awesome, the action fierce, the level design better every mission, and the game looked great. The World Is Not Enough joined SSX as the year's most surprising achievements.

It takes little awareness to see that the Dreamcast truly came into its own in the year 2000, illustrating perfectly how all new hardware takes time to realize its true potential. People like to complain about the fairly stunning-looking, first-generation PS2 games not measuring up to Dreamcast, while forgetting that the DC is nearly two years into its life cycle. I don't think there's any question that the PS2 will be doing unheard-of things in as much time or less. Around the same time that the PS2 will be getting mega games, Microsoft's big money approach will certainly ensure an interesting playing field when they try to do what Sony did to Sega and Nintendo in the last generation. That is, literally come from nowhere and become the dominant force. Their work will be cut-out for them, especially if Gamecube is thrown into the mix.



Sin and Punishment (N64 import)

I recognize that FFIX represents the fuller, more complete experience, but heart leads head in this case, and I have to give my top honor to *Sin and Punishment*, the best 3D action/shooter I've played in a long time. This is pure Treasure

brilliance in a hardware-defying display, an unbeatable combination that brings the N64 its version of *Gunstar Heroes*, an uncompromising action title that will be remembered for years to come.



Final Fantasy IX (PS)

Simply one of the most incredible looking games ever made, Square's *Final Fantasy IX* is nothing short of remarkable. The CG is so good, I feel guilty watching it, well aware of the amount of blood, sweat, and talent that went into

making it. And the game itself, a streamlined, perfectly executed classic Japanese RPG, is every bit the equal of its stunning looks. Overall, I consider this Square's best work to date.



Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)

We didn't get two Super Mario 64s, but at least we got two Zeldas, and *Majora's Mask* is very nearly the equal of its predecessor. Like almost every Nintendo effort, there is a brilliance at work, a keen, almost supernatural understanding of what a video game must be to be enjoyable.



Ridge Racer V (PS2)

Some found this old hat, but I was floored by *Ridge Racer V*. Dangerously addictive *Ridge Racer* powersliding and track design combined with astounding graphics is my idea of racing heaven. And the class-leading presentation is so far and above what other developers put out there that it makes comparison irrelevant and, I think, disrespectful.



Vagrant Story (PS)

The game's intricate, beautifully realized battle system brought a level of inspiration to the action/RPG genre that's never been seen before, and its first rate story made it even better. The game also boasted the most artful polygonal manipulation since *Metal Gear*, bringing a richness and drama to a system that we thought had shown us all it could.



Mario Tennis (N64)

Mario did sports again, and again the result was marvelous. *Mario Tennis* was almost criminally fun, with gameplay that was both simple and sophisticated. The graphics were perfect, and there's such a sense of joy inherent in every aspect of the game that it's impossible not to have a good time with it, especially with four players.



Grandia II (DC)

Easily one of the best-looking real-time RPGs ever created, Game Arts' *Grandia II* also benefited from having my favorite RPG battle system this year. Fast, addictive, deep, and very clever, the quasi-turn-based battles were a joy to experience, elevating what was basically a highly sophisticated dungeon exploration game.



Ferrari F355 (DC)

The most uncompromising of console racers, Yu Suzuki's *Ferrari F355* shows the level of excellence that can be achieved when a singular idea is pursued to its most satisfying conclusion. The game's initial difficulty combined with its rather limited race options stunted its appeal, but those with patience and an appreciation for fine physics, like me, loved this.



FIFA 2001 (PS2 import)

You may be wondering why the Japanese version of *FIFA 2001* made it into my Top 10 over the domestic release, and the answer is a simple one: I prefer the Japanese commentary. Charged with energy and hilarious goal yells, the import version creamed the domestic's dry voice-over. Otherwise, it's the same fantastic-looking and -playing game of soccer.



Samba de Amigo (DC)

Highly unique and massively addictive, Sonic Team's foray into the music/rhythm genre stands as one of the premiere examples. *Samba de Amigo* is so simple yet so satisfying, the game works on almost a primal level as you gleefully shake the maracas in perfect rhythm to the music and to the game's bright, cheerful graphics.

The past year provided a great mix of new technology, new concepts and some classic ideas made even better this time around. I'm nothing if not an old-school gamer, so even though I'm thoroughly impressed by games like Jet Grind Radio, Skies of Arcadia and NFL 2K1, you'll find my Top 10 list dominated by classics that will endure for years. Games like Zelda, Street Fighter, Final Fantasy and Lunar will always be great, and carrying the spirit of classic game design are new titles like Spider-Man and Sin and Punishment. I really have to give Sega credit for having a great year, while Sony's lousy PS2 launch definitely has them on the "naughty" list. Still, looking on to 2001, the PS2 looks like it should redeem itself with some great games (can you say Konami?), and with Xbox, Gamecube and Game Boy Advance coming...I'm excited just thinking about it.



Final Fantasy IX (PS)

FFIX is pretty much a no-brainer for the top of the list. Square did just about everything right on this one, taking the fantastic CG and prerendered backgrounds from the previous PS versions and mixing them with the breathtaking setting,

diverse and intriguing characters and heartfelt story that made the series so good back in the 16-bit era. The more I played FFIX, the more I liked it. It's as close to a flawless RPG as you'll ever get.



Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete (PS)

Lunar 2 may be a remake of an old game, but it's a great remake of one of the best RPGs ever made. The visuals provide sheer charm to mix with the drama of the new cutscenes, and the strategic battle system is one of the

best ever. Most of all, it's about the characters - Lucia, Hiro, Leo, Ronfar, G...oops, I almost spoiled it. If you missed the Sega CD version, don't miss it again.

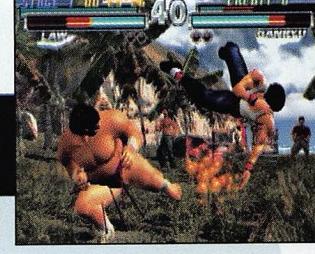


Capcom vs. SNK (DC)

I severely disagree with my fellow editors on best fighting game of the year. Street Fighter III is a solid fighter, but only Capcom vs. SNK truly captured that special magic that made us all start playing fighting games to begin with. The greatest collection of characters ever, gorgeous backgrounds and tons of unlockable secrets were among the highlights.

Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)

Let's see...it's Zelda, and...it's Zelda! What's not to like? Even though Miyamoto didn't have as big a hand in this game, the magic is still perfectly evident, as the game's fantastic world can suck players in for hours on end. The ability to change forms adds a whole new dimension to the gameplay, and the Zelda theme song is back!



Spider-Man (PS)

Neversoft's take on one of the best-known superheroes in the world is fantastic. The variety of play, the excellent voice acting, the nice cutscenes, and especially the representation of Spidey's powers were all awesome. Even the N64 version, despite the rather sloppy port job, was great fun.

Mr. T Gets a Job (PS)

Wow! What a great RPG! Yeah, the graphics are pretty dated, but how many other RPGs are there to star the legendary Mr. T? Plus, it has some of the best writing I've seen this side of Working Designs, along with an incredibly strange sense of humor. Everyone must play this game. Note to Mr. T: please, please don't sue me.

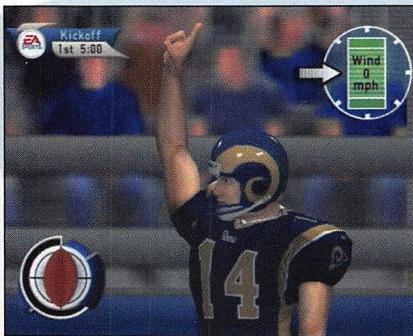
Resident Evil Code: Veronica (DC)

The strange part is that I don't even consider myself a Resident Evil fan. It's true. Nonetheless, Code:Veronica blew me away. The visuals are just awesome, the puzzles are challenging, and everything is done just right. Even if you've never liked a Resident Evil game before, this one will change your mind.

Tekken Tag Tournament (PS2)

Again, I have to argue with my fellow editors. How can TTT not win for best graphics in 2000? Those amazing faces, those incredible muscled bodies...nothing else even comes close. That's saying nothing of the amazing backgrounds, filled with extraneous characters and purely marvelous detail. It plays damn good too.

From attending the rumor-confirming unveiling of Microsoft's Xbox at the 2000 Game Developer's Conference to my exclusive day spent at the Microsoft Xbox campus to the phenomenal list of third-party developers, my year has been spent captivated by this system. Oh sure, there was an amazing array of games to play in the last 12 months across all the platforms, especially in the sports arena, but there's just something ethereal about being on the cusp of new, soon-to-be famous, gaming technology. Speaking of which, PS2 is currently the single best piece of home electronics a person could own: the best-looking games on the planet, DVD capabilities, music. Sega, Dreamcast, and online gaming showed that they are for real, while Nintendo unveiled Gamecube and GB Advance to salivating gamers and brought back my old friend, Link.



Madden NFL 2001 (PS2)

My favorite genre of games is sports. My favorite sport is football. My favorite football series has always been the Madden games, so it's no surprise that this is my top game of the year. Not to be outshined by the graphic power of

PS2, EA Sports introduced a new concept to the sports arena with the collection of the Madden cards, adding a level of replay value previously unseen in a sports title. It was truly a paradise for Madden fans.



ESPN NBA 2Night (PS2)

It was such a treat to receive this game at the end of the year. It's good to see Konami come out with a super strong engine in the sports arena; they have been missed. While NBA 2Night is far from perfect, it is just such a complete, introductory engine that it had me saying that it is better than both NBA 2K1 and NBA Live. Play them all and you'll see why.

NFL 2K1 (DC)

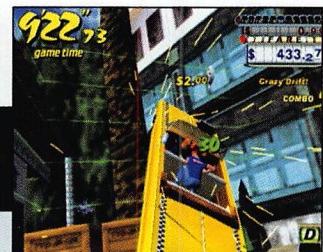
The ability to not only play a console game online, but a football game as gorgeous as NFL 2K1 has changed my mind about online gaming. Taking the brilliance that was already NFL 2K and adding not only the network gaming, but improvements in the graphics, gameplay and overall feel is the reason NFL 2K1 has been played in our office since its release.



Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)

Two years after the glory that was Ocarina of Time, we are graced with Majora's Mask and the continuing saga of the most beloved adventurer in the history of gaming. The masters at Nintendo know how to create compelling, diverse,

magical gameplay probably better than anyone in the industry and MM is a prime example. This will probably be the last AAA title for the N64, and if it is, what a way to go out.



Mario Tennis (N64)

When I first played Mario Tennis at E3, I knew that it would be to video game tennis what the Nintendo/Camelot game Mario Golf was to the golfing genre. The physics are brilliant, the game bores with personality and it does something only an enthusiast would love—introduce a new Nintendo character (Waluigi). A multi-player experience is a must.

Crazy Taxi (DC)

I played Crazy Taxi when it came out in the arcade and, knowing Sega's arcade-to-console talents, looked forward to this title more than any other on the Dreamcast. The balls-out, aggressive, quick-fix gameplay was one of the best original titles of the year—of course, from Sega. It's one of the few games that I am still playing a year after its release.



Jet Grind Radio (DC)

The most original game of the year, Jet Grind Radio showed a look and had a feel that was truly Sega. The game had an amazing accompanying soundtrack and the introduction of graffiti as a major gameplay element was a stroke of genius. Another game with stunning level design, this will undoubtedly not be the last we see of JGR.

SSX (PS2)

Until the release of this amazing snowboarding experience, 1080 Snowboarding for N64 had been the best in the genre. The sensation of speed in SSX is truly breathtaking. And with the outstanding level design, it makes one forget this is a first-generation title. SSX is now the model for all games for not only snowboarding, but for all extreme racing titles.



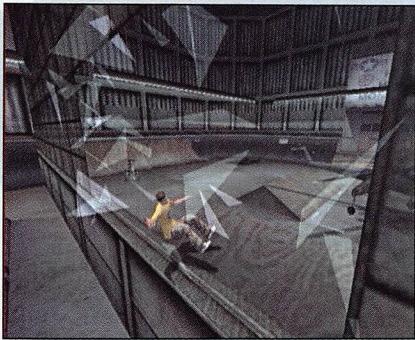
FIFA 2001 (PS2)

There are few soccer video game franchises, but that's okay, because FIFA 2001 recreates the game so beautifully that there is really no need for others. The models and animations are superb, the gameplay is fast-paced and there is a sense of excitement from beginning to end. This is another must-have for multi-player sports gaming.

Perfect Dark (N64)

Although Perfect Dark wasn't the success that GoldenEye 007 was, the game still offered an amazing FPS experience with a great storyline and the introduction of a new, sexy video-game heroine in Joanna. With a vastly configurable multiplayer mode and the beautiful (for N64) textures and effects, the game triumphed over the competition that was face mapping.

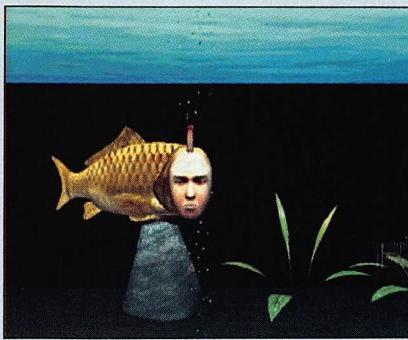
It is hard to capsule the games of 2000 without sounding cliché. Year of the Sequel, Year of the Dreamcast or even Best Year Ever don't really express how far and beyond this past year has been. Developers have done an honorable job of making each system worth owning. And while sequels were strong in the Y2G, the outbreak of original titles have hinted to the direction the evolving technology will take us (i.e. Seaman, Shenmue, SSX and Smuggler's Run). Video games are continuing to gel science, art and story telling into a permanent fixture in popular culture, and it's great. With more casual gamers becoming connoisseurs, publishers are being forced to release products that play as exciting as they appear; and the fun has only begun.



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (PS)

This game has been both entertaining and inspirational. The level design, sound engineering, visuals and play mechanics are perfectly executed. Pushing bigger tricks and longer combos pit you on the edge of your seat. And when

you nail a solid line and roll away, you feel a sense of accomplishment that further pushes you to stretch your limits. A great gaming experience, utilizing a sport that just about everyone is fascinated with.



Seaman (DC)

While most of the stories about Seaman describe an ill-mannered, sarcastic persona, mine was very pleasant and continues to thrive. The dedication and curiosity that grew during my stint with Sushi, my Seaman, has been unlike any game



Mr. Driller (DC)

Puzzle games have been a hobby of mine since Merlin and Rubik's Pyramid. And until Mr. Driller, Dr. Robotnick's Mean Green Machine was my all-time video puzzle game. The concept is original, the action is frantic and Mr. Driller is a reflection of Namco characters from the mid-eighties. This one is fun in any situation, whether you're alone or with a group.



Super Magnetic Neo (DC)

Here is something special. Something for the old-school 8- and 16-bit veterans. Classic platform gaming that uses some crafty play mechanics and tough jumping patterns. Include a smooth 60fps and a variety of different locales both in look and design, and you have one of the best titles DC owners could purchase.



Vagrant Story (PS)

Squaresoft has cornered the market in adventure role-playing games and Vagrant Story uncovers some tricks not yet seen on the PS. The ability to configure weapon attacks and manipulate enemies depending on where and how you attack demands strong, thought-out strategy. Square had a great list of games in 2000; this was my favorite of the bunch.



Smuggler's Run (PS2)

Rockstar has created quite a name for itself, and the alliance with Angel Studios has been prosperous. SR includes a style of driving game previously not created, with expansive regions and great vehicle physics. A masterful first-generation game for the PS2. A great game to show off your new system and an even better game to play and enjoy.



Moto GP (PS2)

Wow! This game is unbelievable. But if you are looking to scream through tracks without using precision braking and plotted gear changing, you need not apply. This game sets out to deliver the exact experience of being on the back of a superbike. A great investment title, because it will take time and patience to perfect; a skill worth acquiring.



MDK2 (DC)

The original title pales in comparison to the glory this game holds. Now, please don't misunderstand my point: MDK is a sweet game, but MDK2 builds so much more from the original concept. Each of the three characters are unique and deliver a completely different style of play mechanic. The game is huge and will take many hours to complete. DC owners rejoice.



Incredible Crisis (PS)

The Grizzwalds, they're not. Still, the poor family caught in the fervor of Incredible Crisis might as well have been dreamed up by National Lampoon. Borrowing many play styles from Parappa, Bemani games and Simon (yes, the four-colored sight and sound memory game), Incredible Crisis delivers the freshest and most original title on the PS in 2000.



UFC (DC)

This almost went to WWF No Mercy, just because I wanted an N64 game on my list. The truth is, UFC is a much stronger game in my opinion. The learning curve is easy, but rising to a deeper level of gameplay unlocks a tense game of give and take. The commands are responsive, visuals are insane and there's great grappling/submission situations.

GRO YEAR IN REVIEW



STEVE THOMASON

Game of the Year

1. Final Fantasy IX (PS)
2. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
3. Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete (PS)

Best Action Game

1. Jet Grind Radio (DC)
2. Spyro: Year of the Dragon (PS)

Best Adventure Game

1. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
2. Rayman 2: The Great Escape (DC)

Best First-Person Shooter

1. Perfect Dark (N64)
2. The World is Not Enough (N64)

Best RPG

1. Final Fantasy IX (PS)
2. Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete (PS)

Best Fighting Game

1. Dead or Alive 2 (DC)
2. Street Fighter Alpha 3 (DC)

Best Racing Game

1. Ridge Racer V (PS2)
2. Test Drive Le Mans (DC)

Best Alternative Driving Game

1. Crazy Taxi (DC)
2. Star Wars: Episode 1 Racer (DC)

Best Wrestling Game

1. WWF No Mercy (N64)
2. WWF SmackDown! 2: Know Your Role (PS)

Best Alternative Game

1. Mario Party 2 (N64)
2. Chu Chu Rocket (DC)

Best Music/Rhythm Game

1. Samba de Amigo (DC)
2. Space Channel 5 (DC)

Best Sports Game

1. NFL 2K1 (DC)
2. Madden NFL 2001 (PS2)

Best Import Game

1. Sin and Punishment (N64)
2. Guilty Gear X (DC)

Best Music

1. Chrono Cross (PS)
2. Final Fantasy IX (PS)

Best CG Sequences

1. Final Fantasy IX (PS)
2. Resident Evil Code: Veronica (DC)

Most Innovative

1. Seaman (DC)
2. Shenmue (DC)

Best Graphics

1. Shenmue (DC)
2. The Legend of Mana (PS)

Handheld Game of the Year

1. Metal Gear Solid (GBC)
2. Metal Slug 2nd Mission (NGPC)

Console of the Year

Dreamcast



SHOLA AKINNUSO

Game of the Year

1. Final Fantasy IX (PS)
2. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
3. Jet Grind Radio (DC)

Best Action Game

1. MDK 2 (DC)
2. Jet Grind Radio (DC)

Best Adventure Game

1. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
2. Resident Evil Code: Veronica (DC)

Best First-Person Shooter

1. Quake III Arena (DC)
2. The World is Not Enough (N64)

Best RPG

1. Final Fantasy IX (PS)
2. Skies of Arcadia (PS)

Best Fighting Game

1. Tekken Tag Tournament (PS2)
2. Capcom vs. SNK (DC)

Best Racing Game

1. Ferrari F355 Challenge (DC)
2. Test Drive Le Mans (DC)

Best Alternative Driving Game

1. Crazy Taxi (DC)
2. Midnight Club (PS2)

Best Wrestling Game

1. Ultimate Fighting Championship (DC)
2. WWF Smackdown 2: Know Your Role (PS)

Best Alternative Game

1. RPG Maker (PS)
2. Seaman (DC)

Best Music/Rhythm Game

1. Samba de Amigo (DC)
2. Space Channel 5 (DC)

Best Sports Game

1. NFL 2K1 (DC)
2. SSX (PS2)

Best Import Game

1. Daytona USA (DC)
2. Guilty Gear X (DC)

Best Music

1. Jet Grind Radio (DC)
2. Medal of Honor Underground (PS)

Best CG Sequences

1. Final Fantasy IX (PS)
2. Resident Evil Code: Veronica (DC)

Most Innovative

1. Seaman (DC)
2. Shenmue (DC)

Best Graphics

1. Shenmue (DC)
2. Dead or Alive 2 (DC)

Handheld Game of the Year

1. Metal Gear Solid (Game Boy Color)
2. Donkey Kong Country (Game Boy Color)

Console of the Year

Dreamcast



READERS CHOICE OF THE YEAR

Game of the Year

1. Shenmue (DC)
2. Skies of Arcadia (DC)
3. TIE: Jet Grind Radio (DC) / Lunar 2: EB Complete (PS)

Best Action Game

1. Jet Grind Radio (DC)
2. MDK 2 (DC)

Best Adventure Game

1. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
2. Shenmue (DC)

Best First-Person Shooter

1. Quake III Arena (DC)
2. Perfect Dark (N64)

Best RPG

1. Skies of Arcadia (DC)
2. Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete (PS)

Best Fighting Game

1. Dead or Alive 2 (DC)
2. Capcom vs. SNK (DC)

Best Racing Game

1. Ridge Racer (PS2)
2. Test Drive Le Mans (DC)

Best Alternative Driving Game

1. Crazy Taxi (DC)
2. Driver 2 (PS)

Best Wrestling Game

1. WWF No Mercy (N64)
2. WWF SmackDown! 2: Know Your Role (PS)

Best Alternative Game

1. Jet Grind Radio (DC)
2. Seaman (DC)

Best Music/Rhythm Game

1. Samba de Amigo (DC)
2. Space Channel 5 (DC)

Best Sports Game

1. NFL 2K1 (DC)
2. Virtua Tennis (DC)

Best Import Game

1. Guilty Gear X (DC)
2. Sin and Punishment (N64)

Best Music

1. Chrono Cross (PS)
2. Final Fantasy IX (PS)

Best CG Sequences

1. Final Fantasy IX (PS)
2. Resident Evil Code: Veronica (DC)

Most Innovative

1. Jet Grind Radio (DC)
2. Shenmue (DC)

Best Graphics

1. Shenmue (DC)
2. Dead or Alive 2 (DC)

Handheld Game of the Year

1. Dragon Warrior I & 2 (GBC)
2. Pokemon Gold/Silver (GBC)

Console of the Year

Dreamcast



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all-format previews

published monthly by: MILLENNIUM PUBLICATIONS INC. GRAF

ACE COMBAT 4

preview by: b. flechter • dev/pub: namco • avail: fall 2001

"Look at the detail on those planes! That sky! Those clouds! The explosions, the smoke trails, the ground detail!" So goes the reaction to Ace Combat 4. Still on video, mind you. GR



SONIC ADVENTURE 2

preview by c. hoffman • dev: sonic team • pub: sega • avail: fall 2001

Just after last issue's massive Dreamcast feature, Sega delivered a playable version of Sonic Adventure 2 into our eager little hands. Though only the first level of the game, just a few minutes of hands-on with the wily hedgehog assured us that the game provides the same break-neck fun as the first Sonic Adventure. Though playing like the previous game, many new moves are included, such as grinding on rails, grabbing ledges and swinging on poles. The textures are simply amazing, and some moments, like the snowboarding scene that starts the level and the truck chase at the end, are just plain cool. Best of all, this same "City Escape" demo will be packed in with Phantasy Star Online when it hits the U.S., just like it was in Japan. GR



ARMY MEN: GREEN ROGUE

preview by s. thomason • dev/pub: 3do • avail: q1 2001

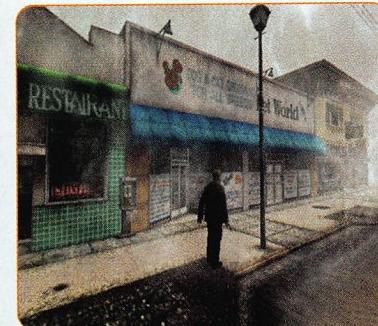
The Army Men name might not be synonymous with quality gaming, but believe it or not, Green Rogue actually looks like it might be fun. Like an old-school shooter, forward movement is forced along at a steady pace as the player concentrates on shooting enemies and dodging copious amounts of incoming fire. The final game is expected to contain 16 levels and a two-player cooperative mode. GR



SILENT HILL 2

preview by c. hoffman • dev: kcet • pub: konami • avail: august

The game that's undoubtedly on the top of every survival horror fan's wish list is Silent Hill 2. As we mentioned in our TGS coverage, the game (from what they've shown in a four-minute trailer) looks absolutely amazing and every bit as twisted as the original. Although what they've shown is a mix of CG and real-time gameplay, it all looks so good it's hard to tell them apart. The story this time is completely new. Players assume the role of a man named James, whose wife Mary asks to meet him in the town of Silent Hill, a place that has special memories for them. The strange part is that his wife passed away three years ago, and the horror begins from there. Many of the aspects that made the original so creepy are returning in the sequel. The blood-splattered hospital walls look even more vile than before, you can still bludgeon monsters with a steel pipe, and the radio will still be there as a constant reminder of fear. Takayoshi Sato, the game's CG director, says that this time around, the characters and monsters (including 10 new creatures) will be even more evil and dark, and also that more of Silent Hill's back story will be revealed. The nightmare returns this fall. GR





ATV OFFROAD FURY

BY DAVE HALVERSON

If Sony's Offroad Fury is any indication, the next wave of PS2 games is going to exceed expectations

Spectacular rider animation, realistic terrain, and sophisticated bike models are still missing in today's motocross games, but those qualities are limited only by hardware," I wrote that last month referring to the last two significant PlayStation motocross games, honestly thinking such a game to be at least a year away. I know time flies, but this is ridiculous. The next week Sony waltzed in with the most superb off-road racing game I've ever played and in terms of realistic graphics, the best-looking video game I've ever seen. So this is the PS2? Could this be one of an armload of tricks ready to slide out of Sony's sleeve?

ATV must have been in the works since the inception of the hardware, yet it arrived nearly finished—untainted by the usual online ridicule that haunts a game in development, a bona fide surprise. Ape Escape and Crash have both had their covers blown, yet ATV remained a secret—*weird priorities*.

Looking past its groundbreaking visuals—

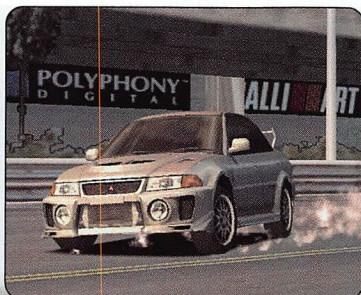
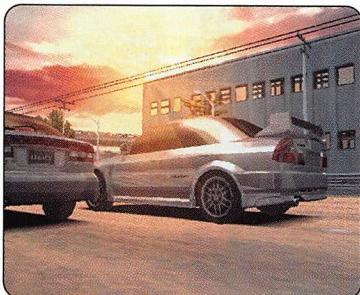
which is hard—the game has real depth, in both the number of available venues (you can enter a full Supercross season, a Freestyle contest, an 11-race National circuit, or wide-open checkpoint-based Enduros) and in the actual gameplay. The 24(!) available quads, including enduro and motocross models, sport full tweakability and you can choose a male or female rider, then flip through a rainbow of color coordinated gear. Once you hit the dirt, prepare to be amazed. The game's masterful balance and physics—a feeling absent since Nintendo's Wave Race 64—will make any doubts you had about PS2 melt away. The intricacies of racing a quad have been perfectly captured and translated into the game. Once you come to grips with all of its nuances, the gameplay fuses a seamless connection between player and game. It just completely rules.

The long, intricate courses emphasize realistic conditions and precision rider control. If you endo in to the face of a jump your rider will bail, and if you go off the track you have to ride back on—no reset. The only way to win is to master the ebb and flow of the terrain—no pinning it wide open and steering allowed. You can even set your music from Primus to Soundgarden and everything in between; it's like having an in-game Sony Music sampler.

ATV Offroad Fury has me bug-eyed and sleepless at 70-percent complete, so I can't imagine how they're going to refine it beyond this point. We'll have an interview with the game's producer along with the review next issue to find out.

GR





GRAN TURISMO 3

BY MIKE HOBBS



What is there to say that you don't already know? GT3 is going to astound, and the wait is almost over

Gran Turismo 3 perfectly illustrates my contention that it's not always the province of advanced hardware to provide new and previously unimagined gameplay sensations. Sometimes, it's enough that a supremely durable idea is passed through the latest silicon, coming out the other side wearing a stunning new suit of polygons.

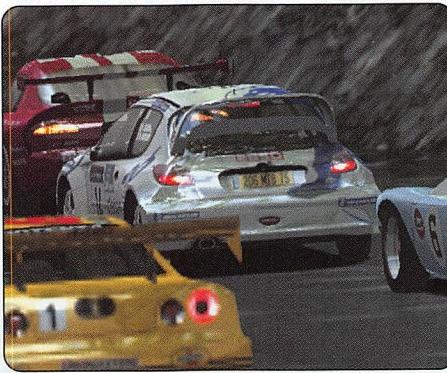
Such is the case here. Building on what is arguably the most well rounded driving engine in existence, Gran Turismo 3 is transformed by the hardware into a very nearly new experience. This was easy to see in our brief stint with the Tokyo Game Show version, which Sony was kind enough to bring around recently. Though a few months old, it left little doubt as to the superior potential of this game.

There is a question mark hanging over the final version, however. Sony is currently remaining tight lipped on the final list of available cars, only willing to allow that there will be around 150, with most of



those coming from manufacturers featured in GT2. That's quite a drop from the nearly 600 cars in the previous game, but with 4,000-5,000 polygons per vehicle, that's a mountain of modeling that could not have been climbed in any reasonable time table.

Feeling shorted? Nonsense. There will be fifteen tracks, which is a substantial increase, and new features like rain soaked courses promise to lend a good measure of dynamic discovery to the time-tested gameplay. And of course, there are the graphics. We're a ways from reality here, but this is as close as any racing game has come yet. Using what looks like real time reflection mapping, you'll see parts of the environment reflected in the cars' surfaces, and the quality of the models themselves is unprecedented, all at 60 frames per second. Yes, GT3 is going to be great. GR





RING OF RED

BY MIKE HOBBS

A truly inspired premise drawn in a wonderful style, Konami's Ring of Red injects life into the turn-based strategy genre

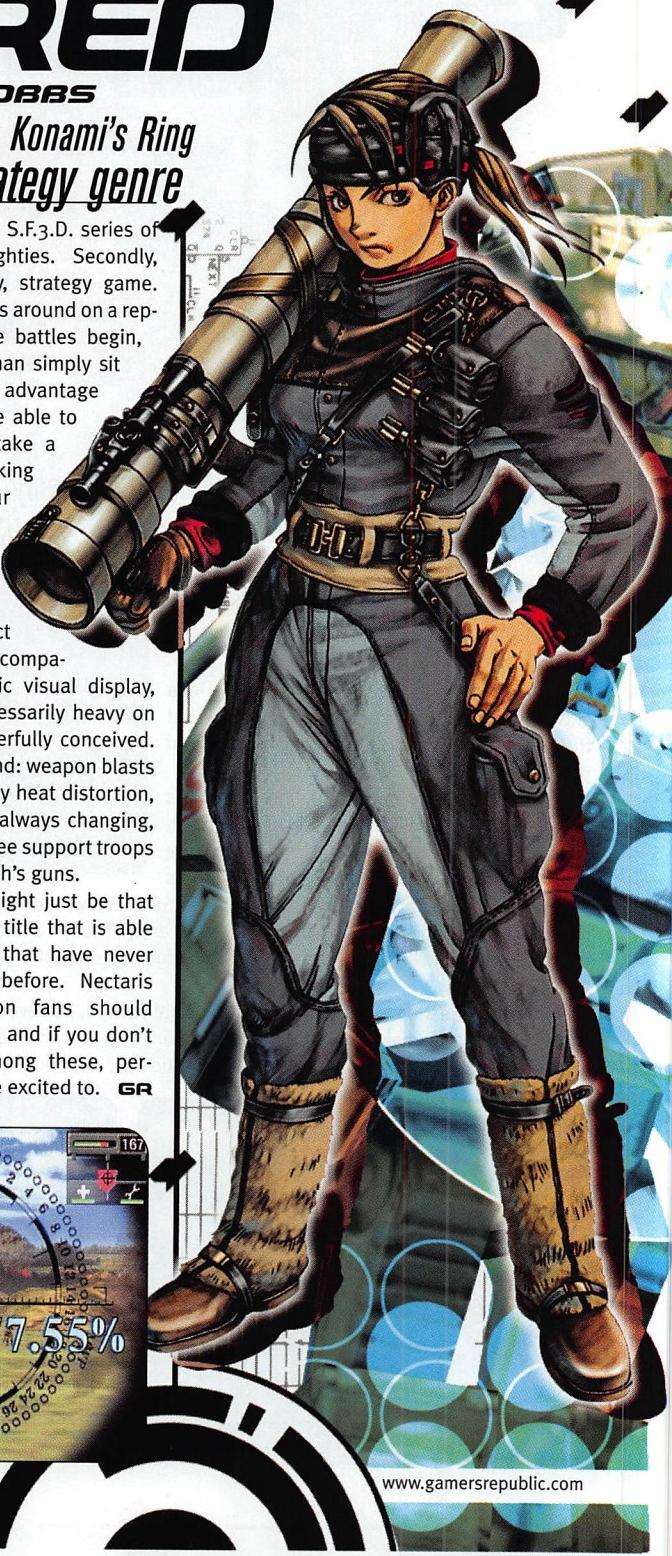
Ring of Red begins on a high note with this interesting, sci-fi idea of an alternate past, one in which Japan is split into a north and south during the early twentieth century and battles are waged not with tanks and planes, but with combustion powered mechs. This interesting recasting of history is illustrated most dramatically in the clever opening cinema, which shows giant, lumbering mechs integrated, Forest Gump-style, into scratchy, archival war footage.

This great set up is at the service of a turn-based strategy game. Now, before you get that look on your face, let me tell you why it's so great. Firstly, Ring of Red has a wonderful look to it, a subdued, WWII-like blend of Japanese and German aesthetic values that reminds me

very much of Nitto's brilliant S.F.Z.D. series of model kits from the late eighties. Secondly, this isn't your average, dry, strategy game. Sure, you still move your units around on a representational grid, but once battles begin, you are given more to do than simply sit back and watch a terrain advantage grant you a victory. You are able to direct ground troops and take a direct involvement in attacking your enemy. Firing your mech's main weapon uses an engaging system where an unsteady aiming reticle requires you to fire at the optimum moment to inflict critical damage. All this accompa-

nied by a fantastic visual display, that while not necessarily heavy on polygons, is wonderfully conceived. Great effects abound: weapon blasts are accompanied by heat distortion, the time of day is always changing, and you can even see support troops reloading your mech's guns.

Ring of Red might just be that crossover strategy title that is able to attract players that have never tried such a game before. Nectaris and Front Mission fans should already be excited, and if you don't count yourself among these, perhaps you should be excited too. GR





METAL GEAR SOLID 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

You've seen the shots. You've heard the hype. Rest assured, it's all true. Metal Gear Solid 2 is the real deal



Okay, so you've been nearly beaten to death by Metal Gear Solid 2 coverage since the game debuted at E3. Lots of pics, lots of hype, lots of promises, but no actual gameplay. Until now. At Konami's First Annual Gamers Day, the company finally demonstrated a playable Metal Gear Solid 2, and it's everything we'd hoped for. Yeah, it looked good before, but seeing MGS2 run in real time on PS2 and knowing it's not just workstation magic was truly impressive.

As shown in the video footage at ECTS, the game begins with Solid Snake bungee jumping from a traffic-congested bridge to a tanker in the river below. His stealth camouflage breaking on impact, Snake now has to rely on his pure skill—and Codec contact with Otacon—to infiltrate the tanker and find evidence of the new Metal Gear project that is said to be stored on board. Suddenly, a helicopter zooms overhead. Relying on brute force instead of subtlety, terrorists jump down and take over the ship. Snake's mission goes from espionage to survival, and the action begins.

www.gamersrepublic.com

If nothing else, MGS2 will go down in gaming history for its amazing attention to detail. Both the textures and the architecture are absolutely outstanding: from marble floors to pipes in the ceiling to posters of bikini-clad babes inside lockers, environments have never looked so real. You can practically feel the check pattern on metal steps, and special effects like rain on the camera lens will send chills down your spine.

Gameplay looks to be very similar to the original MGS, with the main additions being more dramatic camera angles and an optional first-person mode for shooting enemies with your tranquilizer gun or

other weapons. Cool effects Konami demonstrated included dragging and hiding enemy bodies, and catching enemies off-guard and watching them stand and quiver in fear. Unfortunately, Konami cut the show short after about 20 minutes of play time, but the good news is that a lengthy demo will be bundled with the upcoming PS2 game *Zone of the Enders*. The wait can't end soon enough. **GR**



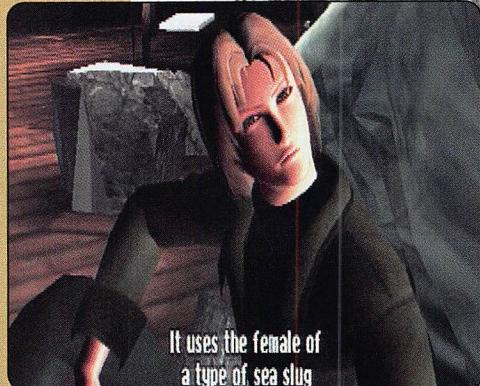
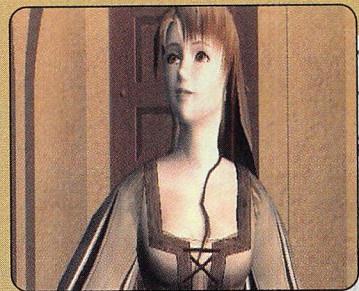
*Everybody makes decisions they regret for the rest of their lives.
Only Eike Kusch can go back and change them*



In everyone's life, people are confronted by what-ifs and could-have-beens. Some are insignificant, and some have a profound effect on everything that follows. That's the theme behind *Shadow of Destiny*, a cinematic mystery-adventure, where every choice you make could lead one step closer to solving the mystery...or one step closer to death.

Strangely enough, when *Shadow of Destiny* begins, the main character, Eike Kusch, is already dead—stabbed to death. However, Eike is somehow granted a second chance, and is allowed to travel back in time and try to avoid being killed. Using a device that can warp him through six time periods, Eike must escape death numerous times and ultimately figure out who is trying to kill him and why.

Loaded with atmosphere and compelling characters, *Shadow of Destiny* is a rare console gaming experience. The game has no battle system whatsoever, and the play consists of exploring, finding items, solving puzzles, and interacting with other characters. In many ways, it's a throwback to games like *King's Quest* or *Monkey Island* on PC, but never did those games look so good or have such incredible stories. The character

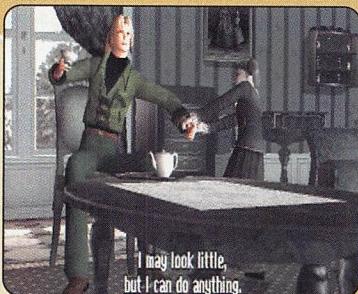


It uses the female of a type of sea slug



SHADOW OF DESTINY

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

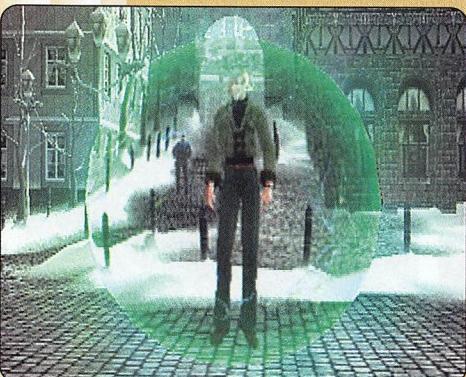


graphics are simply amazing, with jaw-dropping facial expressions and an astounding smoothness. The European architecture is also incredibly realistic, and the town that the game takes place in is filled with impressive details like flags waving in the breeze, not to mention great

atmospheric music.

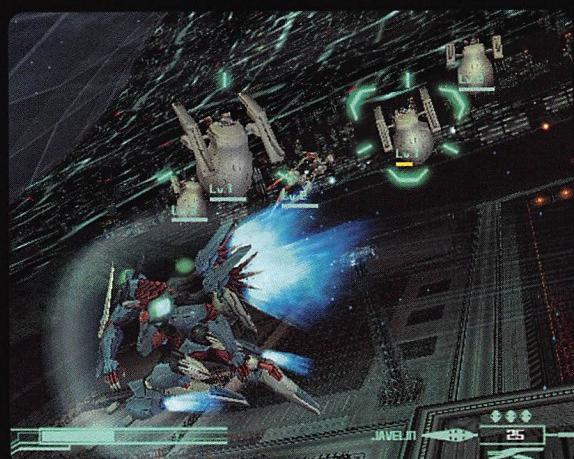
But what's most impressive so far is the characterization and story. The numerous characters Eike meets each have their own stories to tell through lengthy real-time cutscenes, and so compelling are their personalities that they actually seem like real individuals. Even though the game is far from complete, the voice acting is very good, as is the writing, and a subtle sense of humor balances out the mature storyline perfectly.

At this point, *Shadow of Destiny* is a bit linear, and gameplay seems secondary to cinematics, but Konami says that the final version will have multiple ways to solve each puzzle. I can't wait to immerse myself into the final game and help Eike fulfill his destiny. GR



[ZONE OF THE ENDERS]

ZONE OF THE ENDERS

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ZONE OF THE ENDERS

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Giant robots, a deep storyline, awesome action. The makers of MGS deliver gaming's first robot anime simulator

KCE's mech action game, Zone of the Enders, is shaping up to be a true masterpiece in the making. The intuitive controls, numerous weapons, and mix of long-range and melee combat meld together with a great story for something that should be really special. Unfortunately, Konami hasn't shown off any more of ZOE than we had seen at the last TGS - one level which involved engaging several squadrons of enemy mechs in combat - but these new screens they've provided look absolutely spectacular. Though many of the game's aspects are still a mystery, the main character has been revealed as Leo Stenbuck, an introverted 14-year-old boy who lives in the space colony "Antilia," which is populated by laborers known as "Enders." Caught

in the midst of an attack on Antilia that leaves his friends dead, Leo seeks refuge and inadvertently finds himself piloting the giant humanoid robot Jehuty - the one thing that just might be mankind's only hope for survival. As the scenario implies, there's a human element to the game that makes it far more than just all-out action. As you do battle amidst the awesome, detailed cityscapes, you have to concern yourself with the well-being of the populous. You can destroy an enemy, but you might take out an apartment complex in the process; or you can use a building for cover, but the enemies won't hesitate to destroy it to get to you. A numerical gauge tracks the percentage of destruction in each level, and although it's unclear how it will affect the story or the gameplay, Konami says that it ties into the game's overall theme of "the true value of life and the meaning of death." If the fierce action and Evangelion-esque story weren't enough, the game will be bundled with a playable Metal Gear Solid 2 demo when it hits late March, and that should be enough to excite even the most jaded gamers. GR



dreamcast preview

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• developer sonic team • publisher sega • available now



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Yuji Naka's Phantasy Star sequel delivers an action adventure that blurs the lines between on- and offline gameplay

I'm not playing Phantasy Star Online. Since the game won't become its own republic until February (and seeing how initially I wasn't wild about the fact that it will), I thought I'd take this opportunity to play Phantasy Star Offline, and much to my surprise it is proving to be quite a fulfilling venture.

The story, a sort of cross between *Aliens* and *Titan AE*, takes place as Pioneer 2, a massive flying fortress housing some 30,000 refugees, prepares to land on their new home planet, Ragol. The colonists of Pioneer 1 have been on the surface for seven years preparing the planet, having fled their home world as it began to succumb to the raping of its natural resources (a stitch of irony in Naka's view of the future?). As Pioneer 2 prepares for its final descent, Ragol is rocked by a cataclysmic explosion. As Pioneer 2 hovers above, you are sent down, after all communication is lost, to survey the region and report back on what phenomenon may have caused the tragedy. Is Ragol safe? Are the colonists alive? And what has become of the famous Ranger and scientist, Red Ring Rico, the Principal's only daughter? These are all questions you will have to answer.

But first things first: You'll need a new body where you're going, so you must create a character, choosing from HUcast, HUmar, HUnewearl, FOnewearl, FOnearl, FOnewm, RACast, RACaseal, and Ramar. Each has specific strengths and weaknesses based on technique usage, close- and long-

range attack skills, growth potential, defensive and healing capabilities, and TP and HP levels. Once he or she is chosen, you manipulate hair, face, colors, proportions, and then name your new offspring. The character you build will ultimately determine the way you will play the game, both on- and offline, so choose accordingly, keeping in mind solo journeys require long-range attacks and at least mediocre technique usage.

My first brush with the playable PSO, I, of course chose a HUnewearl (who could resist?) and developed some incredible close-combat skills, which, assisted by the game's intuitive combo system, laid waste to the beasts of the forest region with ease. After single-handedly defeating the huge first boss in the game (the massive dragon we've been gawking at these past few months) by hacking away at its feet and head between dodging its attacks, I filed my report and was directed to continue my investigation by proceeding to Ragol's cave region—a complex network of tunnels and vast chambers. I soon found myself sorely out-gunned by its long-range attackers and speedy land sharks. I would need better weapons and higher levels to go it alone. Two words: side quests. And at least so far, this is what I really love about PSO. At the risk of sounding





like a keyboard cowboy, which I am not, you begin to form a real bond with your character (I am now officially a freak) as you invest time in his, her, or its growth. The side quests—jobs offered at the Hunter's Guild—allow you, at your discrepancy, to veer from the central story and go adventuring on your own in pre-existing missions or by downloading new ones. Doing so increases levels and earns precious Meseta needed to purchase weapons and armor conducive with your current ability level. At this point, and I'm maybe 12 hours in, this aspect of the game makes PSO seem almost bottomless. Solo, it seems to be a stellar random-dungeon action-RPG, while online it promises to blossom into so much more. Hooking up with three friends, forming a party with diverse origins, is going to be a blast. On the other hand, joining a game of hacks who like to rush everything that moves and horde items could be frustrating. I've always played games for the personal satisfaction, but PSO is beckoning me to change my ways.

Eventually, I overcame the Cave region, sans solid long-range attack skills, and then I stopped to write this brief preview. But not before taking a RAmor (proficient with guns) through the forest region, which I found substantially easier than with my gorgeous HUnewarl. (Hey, only seven more species to try!) The boss at the end of the caves—a huge, swimming, Dune worm thing—is proving to be a total pain. I've cleared the caves three times to level up and taken every side quest available and he's still taking forever to kill solo. Unless you don't mind lots of repetition, it seems that at least parts of PSO will need to be played online. Going solo all the way seems like an increasingly unrealistic dream, much to my dismay. I've only nicked the surface though so stay tuned for the review, where we'll take a look at the game played both ways.

It's important to note that PSO exudes the series' origins way more than I thought it would, and certainly more than Yuji Naka let on in our November interview. Fans of the series will be more than satisfied. Perhaps he's afraid the association will work against the whole online pitch. Regardless, even though it's presented in real time, the overall feel is unmistakably Phantasy Star. Similar to the way Final Fantasy rearranges your DNA, Yuji Naka has given this game a look and feel that is pure magic, and the soundtrack is masterfully arranged. This is high-quality sci-fi from the master. **GR**



SKIES OF ARCADIA



From the creator of the original "Phantasy Star" titles comes a truly engaging experience. Immerse yourself in a unique and magical adventure that has never existed in a game before now.

Imagine a world where people live on islands, float through the air and use masterfully engineered sky-ships to travel from place to place. You are Vyse, a young pirate struggling with your place as a member of the noble Blue Rogues. Begin your journey through uncharted skies to discover new continents and explore mystical ruins. Throughout your travels, you will fight savage monsters, confront evil pirates, and wage epic battles with a powerful enemy nation.

"Skies of Arcadia" delivers a brilliantly animated cast of characters, monsters and villains, along with astounding 3D graphic environments and a wonderfully scripted storyline. Incorporating a traditional RPG experience with innovative gameplay elements, "Skies of Arcadia" is the epic RPG that you've been waiting for.



Game Features:

- Full 3D world with beautifully detailed graphics.
- Six vast lands to explore with expansive and diverse landscapes.
- Over 70 weapons and 36 magical skills. Modify weapons to give them different magical characteristics.
- Customize your own sky-ship and pirate base. Gather and command up to 22 crew members.
- Hand-to-hand and ship-to-ship combat, featuring spectacular spell effects, devastating special attacks, and the unique "Spirit bar".



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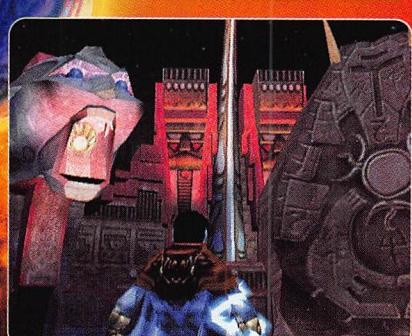
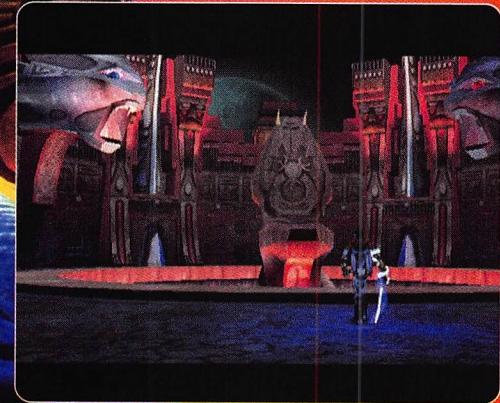
• developer crystal dynamics • publisher eidos • available march



LEGACY OF KAIN SOUL REAVER 2

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Journey into the endless shadows of Nosgoth once again and find peace through the death of the wicked Kain





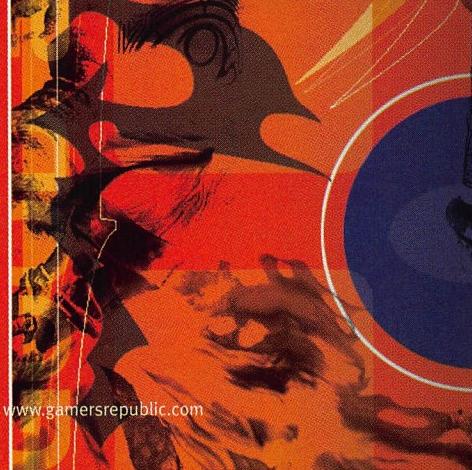
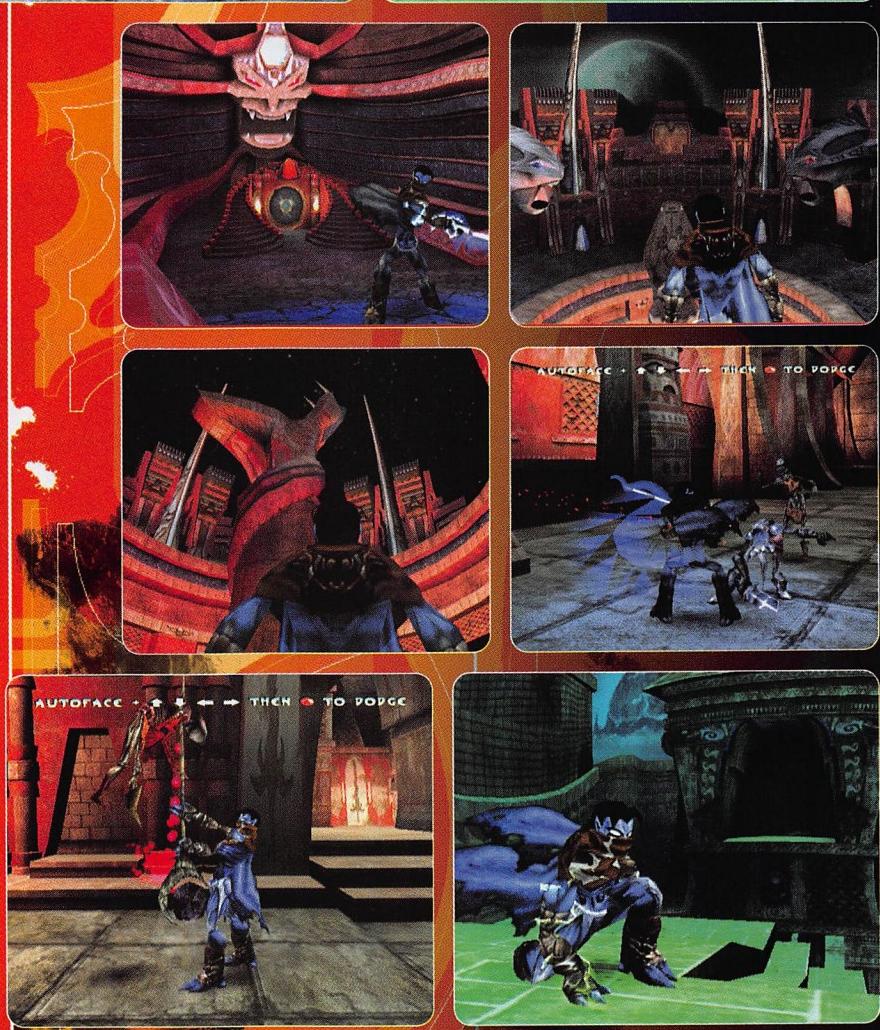
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League of Kain: Soul Reaver was one of last year's best games, a darkly compelling adventure through a spiritual wasteland of vampires and the tormented dead. Forget that it felt incomplete, that its ending was abrupt and unsatisfying; the game still towered over most efforts.

In our November preview, we detailed images of the PlayStation 2 version of this visually striking sequel, and this month we are focusing on Crystal Dynamic's efforts on the Dreamcast. Soul Reaver was, of course, a routine port of the superb PlayStation adventure, but Soul Reaver 2 has broken free from the 32-bit anchor, crafted exclusively as a next-generation game; these screen shots are a tantalizing glimpse of the obvious newfound freedom the Dreamcast has given the designers.

One immediate benefit of the new hardware is the creature models, whose polygon counts have doubled, but technical improvements aren't Crystal's only concern: an increase in the numbers and varieties of the enemy joins an extensive list of valuable additions to the game's world. Answering the critics who found the block-rearrangement puzzles a bit monotonous, emphasis has shifted to a greater variety of tasks and more diverse set of obstacles, and the intriguing story elements that weren't allowed to fully develop in Soul Reaver are being more densely woven throughout the game.

In its current form, Soul Reaver 2 is a scattered puzzle of rich ideas. After receiving yet another one of the pieces—a sample music track, which opens with a haunting female whisper: "Kain refused the sacrifice"—the shapings of a grand picture are continuing to form. **GR**







AND THEN HE CREATED..... "SHENMUE."

In the world of videogames, few individuals vitalized games both culturally and technologically. Among the legendary developers and visionaries stands a man who continually leads the pack in offering groundbreaking games. His latest masterpiece, "Shenmue," breaks all barriers of traditional videogames and defines a new genre of entertainment. He's been recognized for numerous games in the field of technology, art and entertainment including "Virtua Fighter," "Hang On" and "Space Harrier." He continues to offer players a visceral gaming experience while taking gameplay to new heights of realism. This legendary man is no other than Yu Suzuki, world-renowned AM2 developer and Sega's leading game producer. Now, he's ready to show the world that gaming is more than just button bashing; it's a fully interactive form of entertainment. His latest title, "Shenmue," delivers a grand

story, incredible graphics, and an innovative system that far exceeds any previous games.

In "Shenmue," players assume the role of Ryo Hazuki, a young man born in the town of Yokosuka and raised with the martial art teachings of his father, Iwao. Players embark on a long journey to solve the mysterious death of Ryo's father in a fully interactive 3D environment where they will communicate with hundreds of characters, fight foes in real-time and search for clues to uncover the reason why Iwao was murdered. Gamers can also play Suzuki's arcade classics like "Space Harrier" and "Hang On" when they visit Yu Arcade in the game. Shenmue raises the bar as one of the most groundbreaking and cinematic games this year — "Shenmue" fully displays the graphics capabilities of the Sega Dreamcast.

WRESTLE WAR!

BY THE HEARTBREAK CHRIS

Pro wrestling is bigger than ever and so are wrestling video games. The past year was especially prolific, with no fewer than seven big-name titles coming out across all systems. The WWF dominated the TV ratings in 2000, but will ECW or WCW pull off the upset when it comes to the games? The Heartbreak Chris breaks it down to separate the superstars from the jobbers, and if you don't like it, we've got two words for ya...

CHAMPION

MID-CARDER

WWF NO MERCY

Hailing From: THQ/Aki

NINTENDO 64

Pro Debut: November 2000

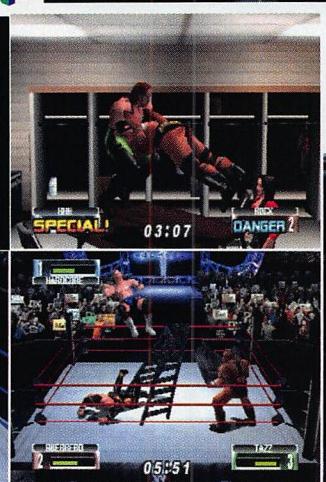
Gimmick: The direct sequel to WWF WrestleMania 2000, No Mercy has big shoes to fill as the follow-up to the best wrestling game of all time.

The Good: Aki's engine is superb; easily the best in the business. The roster has been enhanced with all the new additions to the WWF, including Rikishi, Benoit, Angle and more. The Ladder Match, Iron Man Match, Guest Ref mode and Survival mode are great new additions, and the Career mode is unmatched. There are even new moves and enhanced customization options.

The Bad: There are a number of small flaws, including slowdown in four-player mode, shortened character intros, and the removal of tag team names, but fortunately, they

don't detract from the game too much. The game is also riddled with glitches and typos and the models are a step down from WM2000. Obviously, it was rushed.

Did you know? In the preview version of No Mercy, The Undertaker had his American Bad Ass song by Kid Rock!



WWF ROYAL RUMBLE

Hailing From: THQ/Yuke's



Pro Debut: August 2000

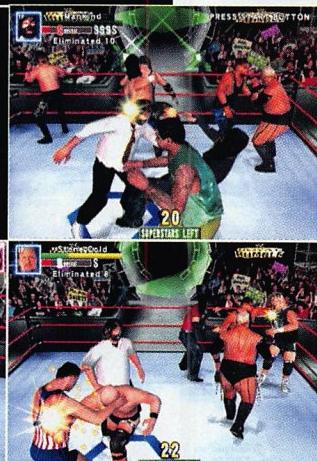
Gimmick: Wild arcade action with nine men in the ring at once.

The Good: The fast action and unprecedented number of characters fighting at once are fun for a while, especially for four-player bouts, and backstage areas, complete with interactive elements, add to the mayhem. The game looks pretty good too, especially the character faces. The sound ain't too shabby either.

The Bad: There's no depth to the game. There are only two modes (Tournament and Royal Rumble), no customization features, and a rather small character roster (where's Billy Gunn!?). The controls could be better too, as you don't auto-face your opponent like you do in most

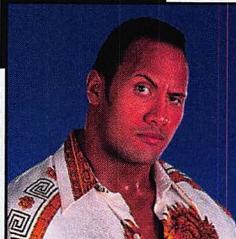
wrestling games. If only THQ had made the game a graphically upgraded version of SmackDown, the game would be great, but as it is, you'll get bored of it after a rental.

Did you know? WWF Royal Rumble was also the name of a Super Nintendo game released by Acclaim back in 1993!



HEIGHT: 6' 5" . WEIGHT: 275 LBS.

THE ROCK



A few years ago, chants of "Rocky sucks" could be heard at every WWF event in the world. Now the millions...and millions of his fans mimic his every word and gesture. Arguably wrestling's biggest star, The Rock has transcended the sport, hosting Saturday Night Live, co-writing a best-selling book and starring in The Mummy Returns feature film.

HARDY BOYZ



HEIGHT: 6' 1" (EACH) . WEIGHT: 449 LBS. (COMBINED)

When it comes to pure athleticism, no tag team compares to the Hardy Boyz. Relying on amazing skill and death-defying aerial maneuvers instead of tired catch phrases, Matt and Jeff Hardy constantly put their bodies on the line to wow crowds. And to think that they did all the motion capture for 1999's WWF Attitude and didn't even make it in the game!

CREATE A CUSTOM OUTSIDER

**A****B**

Face it. Scott Hall, known as Razor Ramon in his WWF days, kind of looks awful in WCW Backstage Assault where he appears as a hidden character (see screen A). However, if you want a damn good Scott Hall, just crack open WWF SmackDown! 2's custom character mode (see picture B). To make your own Scott Hall, follow

these instructions: Nose 1, Eyes 11, Mouth 10, Hair Parts 53, Hair Figure 4, Facial Hair 21 (variation 103, shade 135, brightness 188), Upper Body M-Type 12, Base Figure 3, Elbow Pad 5, Vest 1, Accessory 26, Underwear 1, Shoes 8 (length 60), Knee Pad 6. Recolor it to your liking for your very own picture-perfect Scott Hall!

SCOTT HALL

MID-CARRIER

WWF SMACKDOWN!

Gimmick: THQ's first PS WWF game, complete with backstage storylines.

The Good: A solid title with a good selection of characters and modes, including cage matches and the first-ever guest referee match. It's also the first wrestling game where you can make choices that affect the storyline. Good graphics, especially the changing facial expressions, and loads of fun game-play.

The Bad: Though fantastic when it came out, the main problem is that there's really no reason to get this with the sequel already on the market. Other than that, the custom character editor is poor (you have to use a pre-existing wrestler's face), the game has some minor problems

with move priorities, and a better grapple system would be fantastic.

Did you know? The SmackDown engine is based on the hit Japanese game Toukon Retsuden. SmackDown was also the best-selling PlayStation game for most of 2000!



Hailing From: THQ/Yuke's



Pro Debut: March 2000

MAIN EVENTER

WWF SMACKDOWN! 2

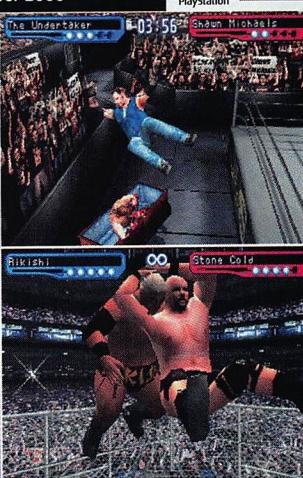
Gimmick: Everything the original SmackDown was, but with even more characters and modes.

The Good: There's more here than in any other wrestling game: Hell in a Cell, Ladder Matches, Casket Matches, TLC Matches, Time Limit title bouts (where the winner is whoever has the belt at the end of the match) and much more. The custom character mode has surpassed Acclaim's to become the best in the industry, and there's a massive roster. The characters look great for a PS game...excellent textures. It's also loads of fun to play, as long as you stick to Exhibition mode.

The Bad: Some aspects just weren't planned well at all. The Career mode is a bore (you have to sit through tons of loading screens

to watch cutscenes that don't pertain to your matches) and the PPV mode is a chore. It's not quite as polished as the original, either.

Did you know? SmackDown! 2 is the first U.S. wrestling sequel to have a "2" in the title since WWF Superstars 2 on Game Boy!

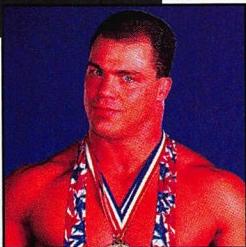


Hailing From: THQ/Yuke's



Pro Debut: November 2000

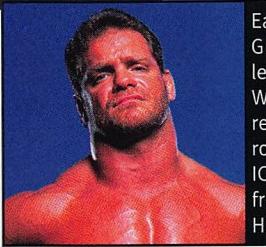
HEIGHT: 6' 2" . WEIGHT: 220 LBS.



He stands for integrity, intensity and intelligence; he's your Olympic Hero. He's Kurt Angle, who defeated Iran's Abbas Jadadi in freestyle wrestling at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics to win a gold medal in the 220 lb. weight class. In less than a year, Kurt has risen to the top of the WWF to become the greatest champion ever. It's true, it's true!

HEIGHT: 5' 10" . WEIGHT: 220 LBS.

CHRIS BENUIT



Early in 2000, Chris Benoit - along with Eddie Guerrero, Perry Saturn and Dean Malenko - left the floundering WCW to come to the WWF. Known for his in-ring ferocity and vast repertoire of moves, The Crippler quickly rose to main-event status and captured the IC belt three times. Really not surprising from a man who trained with Bret and Owen Hart.

KURT ANGLE

JOBBER

WCW B.S. ASSAULT

Hailing From: EA/Kodiak Interactive



Pro Debut: October 2000

Gimmick: No ring, no rules. It's no-holds-barred, weapons-based, backstage brawling.

The Good: Good commentary by Heenan and Schiavone. You can try to kill David Flair and Vince Russo.

The Bad: The graphics, the gameplay, the overall execution. WCW Backstage Assault is painful to play, completely unchallenging, and mired in a concept that really isn't very good to begin with. The characters look laughable, especially ones that should be bulky, like Konnan. The control and even

the camera angles are poorly done.

Did you know? EA decided on the idea for Backstage Assault because they thought the backstage antics were the best part of its predecessor, WCW Mayhem!



JOBBER

ECW H.C. REVOLUTION

Hailing From: Acclaim



Pro Debut: February 2000

Gimmick: Acclaim takes their success with WWF and applies it to ECW's video game debut

The Good: Lots and lots of modes and characters. This is also the first game to feature the ECW stars.

The Bad: This rehash of WWF Attitude offers almost nothing new over its predecessor. The graphics don't seem as good, the collision's still problematic and the moves look stiff. Even the same glitches have been carried over. Plus, it has none of ECW's hardcore style.

Did you know? Much of the

motion capture seen in Hardcore Revolution was done by the Hardy Boyz for WWF Attitude!



JOBBER

ECW ANARCHY RULZ

Hailing From: Acclaim



Pro Debut: August 2000

Gimmick: More of the same from Acclaim, with new characters and more modes

The Good: Still lots of modes and lots of characters, with an updated roster and enhanced two-man commentary.

The Bad: Obviously Acclaim didn't even care with this one. The characters and arenas actually look worse than before, glitches are plentiful, and the animation is ridiculous. Details like Sandman drinking from a wood cane and smashing it against his forehead are especially nice. A sad attempt

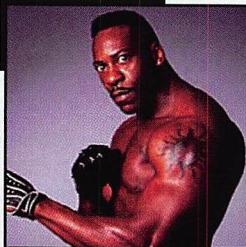
to milk a license.

Did you know? For a good laugh, go to gamersrepublic.com and check out the MPEG of the brimstone match!



BOOKER T

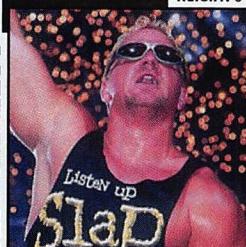
HEIGHT: 6' 3" . WEIGHT: 250 LBS.



A WCW mainstay for years, Booker T has held numerous titles, including the tag team belts on 10 occasions. It was only recently, however, that this popular superstar was catapulted into main event status and became a world champion. Not bad for a guy who was forced to call himself "G.I. Bro" just a few months earlier.

JEFF JARRETT

HEIGHT: 6' 1" . WEIGHT: 230 LBS.



Son of Jerry Jarrett, one of the biggest wrestling promoters in the south, Jeff Jarrett has been around wrestling all his life. Even though his heel persona usually has him leveling opponents with flimsy guitars, don't doubt his technical talents. Also known as Double J or The Chosen One, Jarrett has held multiple titles in both WWF and WCW.

All Star Pro-wrestling

PS2

Squaresoft (Import)

Square should stay out of the squared circle. Although the graphics are beautiful, the rest stinks. The game suffers from horrible control and sluggish gameplay (you use only the analog sticks in the default setting), there are virtually no modes, and the collision and animation are problematic too. We know that Square and EA have a working relationship, so I just pray they don't try to slap WCW characters into the game and bring it over here.

**VIRTUAL PRO WRESTLING 2**

NINTENDO 64

Asmik-Ace/Aki (Import)

Virtual Pro Wrestling is the basis of all of THQ's N64 hits - including *No Mercy* - and after a long delay, *VPW2* hit this year. It plays great and it has all the favorite Japanese stars, and there are even voices the American games lack. However, it's essentially the same as *WrestleMania 2000*, with a Japanese facelift. A more solid game you won't find, but there's no reason to get it unless you're a huge fan of the Japanese leagues.

**ECW HARDCORE REVOLUTION**

GAME BOY COLOR

Acclaim/Crawfish Interactive

Like its console counterparts, ECW on Game Boy is essentially a modified version of Acclaim's old handheld WWF titles. Just like *Attitude* and *Warzone* on GBC, the game doesn't have many moves or modes, but it has a decent selection of stars, including Raven, Sabu, RVD and Mike Awesome. Some of the controls are questionable but the visuals are good, and considering you can pick this one up for about \$10 now, it's not a bad GBC game.

**WCW MAYHEM**

GAME BOY COLOR

Electronic Arts/2n Productions

A unique twist on the wrestling genre, *Mayhem* features strange, cartoony graphics and super-deformed versions of 12 of WCW's biggest stars like Goldberg, Nash and Hogan. There aren't any modes beyond one-on-one matches, but the game does have backstage brawling - a first for a GBC game. Unfortunately it's hard to pull off the limited moves when you want, and the finishers are lame.

**Giant Gram 2000**

Sega (Import)

Considering what other wrestling games are available on the Dreamcast, importing *Giant Gram 2000* would be a pretty good option for your wrestling fix. You won't find any of the flash or big-name American stars that other games have, but the game plays excellent and looks good. An inventive historical match feature is an especially unique addition. The only problem is that mastering the game's moves and counters can be pretty intimidating, especially for those who don't know Japanese.



		WWF NO MERCY	WWF SMACKDOWN!	WWF SMACKDOWN! 2	WWF ROYAL RUMBLE	ECW HARDCORE REVOLUTION	ECW ANARCHY RULZ	WCW BACKSTAGE ASS.
# of characters	74	35	65	20	54	62	58	
# modes/ modifiers	20	15	41	2	26	33	4	
# arenas/ mats	10	15	20	1	4	5	7	
# of players	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	
ring entrances?	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	
backstage brawling?	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	
commentary?	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	
create a ppv?	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	
Mr. T?		Mr. T						
original GR grade	B+	A-	B	C+	C-	D	F	

HEIGHT: 6' . WEIGHT: 232 LBS.

Whether he's on the mat or leaping through the air, Lance Storm is one of the top technical wrestlers in the business today. Which makes it all the more strange that his video game debut was with ECW and he most recently appeared in *WCW Backstage Assault*. No matter. This Calgary, Alberta, Canada native is still the only man to hold three WCW titles at once.

LANCE STORM

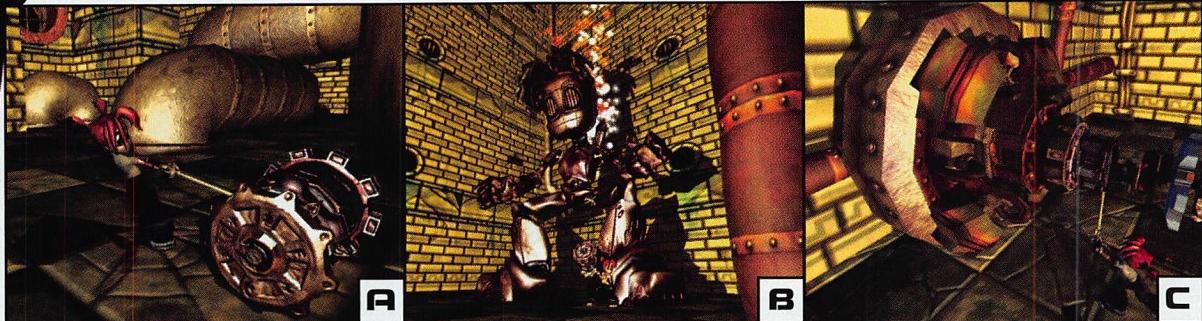
HEIGHT: 6' . WEIGHT: 237 LBS.

ROB VAN DAM

"I'm the whole F'N show!" says Rob Van Dam, otherwise known as RVD. Well, that's questionable, but his arrogant wrestling persona isn't. RVD has been one of ECW's top stars for years, capturing both the tag belts and television title. The ECW world championship has still eluded him, but who knows what the future holds.



XBOX REVEALED



Microsoft officially unveiled its Xbox console at the 2001 Consumer Electronics Show, held in Las Vegas from Jan 6-8, and just as it was intended to do, the debut immediately called into question Sony's apparent dominance over the current gaming landscape.

Of course, such talk is always premature, but Microsoft made it clear that it would be doing everything within its power to achieve success—the most important step here being to provide developers with a system that is powerful and easy to develop for. The twenty-percent-complete game demos that were shown alongside the console certainly seemed to speak to this fact, as Argonaut's *Malice* (A, D) and Oddworld's *Munch's Oddysee* (E, H) both exhibited stunning shadows and a complete lack of the dreaded "jaggies" that seem to bother critics of the PS2.

For better or worse, however, early game demos can be misleading, so it won't be until E3 before any truly legitimate criticisms can be made about the graphical capabilities, but at least

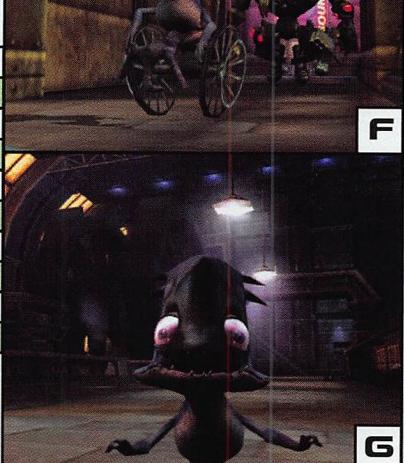
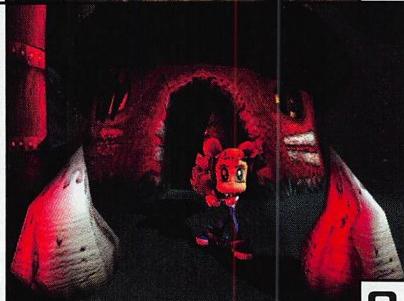
we can talk about the physical aspects of the hardware with no ambiguity. For one, the box itself is quite large by modern game console standards, almost taking on the presence of a VCR. With an internal hard drive and tray-loading DVD drive, this large size must have been unavoidable. At the back of the machine, ports are minimal-power, digital video output, and Ethernet. There is no built-in modem, meaning that Xbox will support broadband only. As for the rather conventional controller, it's most easily described as a cross between a Dual Shock and a Dreamcast pad, and whatever you may think of it in pictures, it is actually very comfortable and will prove to be very useful, especially with its nine-foot cord.

Rumors abounded on the CES floor concerning the Xbox launch details, the most tantalizing being that the machine could be released as early as July and ship with four games preloaded onto the hard drive, including *Tony Hawk* and *Munch's Hard*. Hard to believe. More likely, the machine will ship this fall with a price directly competitive with the PS2. **GR**

The Xbox controller breaks little new ground, but the design is ergonomically sound and features analog buttons, built-in rumble, two data ports, and a convenient nine-foot-long cord.



CPU: 733 MHz PIII
GPU: 250 MHz nVidia/Microsoft
Total RAM: 64MB
Memory Bandwidth: 6.4 GB/sec
Polygon Performance: 125 m/sec
Storage: 2-5x DVD, 8GB hard drive
Sound Channels: 256
Controller ports: x4 (USB-based)
Network: Ethernet (10/100)
Maximum Resolution: 1920x1080



A larger machine than many were predicting, the rather imposing Xbox has the physical presence of a VCR and sports four controller ports, high-speed Ethernet connectivity, an 8GB hard drive, and support for HDTV.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEWS

GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

DOMESTIC REVIEWS

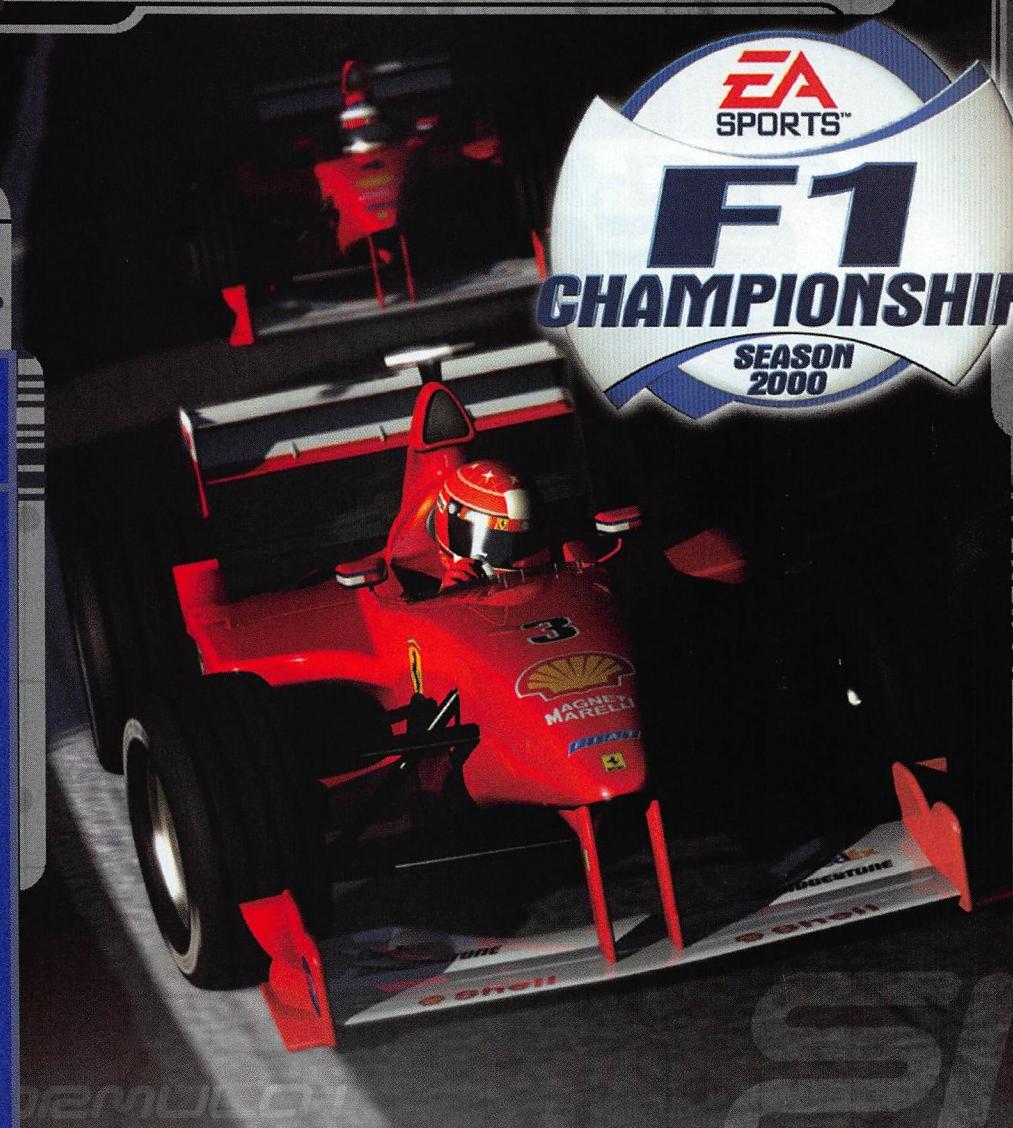
BOUNCER PS2	B
DRIVING EMOTION S PS2	C
F1 CHAMPIONSHIP PS2	A-
INDIANA JONES N64	C+
MEGA MAN X5 PS	B+
PAPER MARIO N64	B-
PERSONA 2 PS	B
POD: SPEEDZONE DC	D
PROJECT JUSTICE DC	C+
ROCK'EM SOCK'EM ROBOTS PS	B-
T. PARK ROLLER COASTER PS2	A-
THUNDER TANKS PS2	D-
WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH N64	A-

SPORTS REVIEWS

ESPN NBA 2 NIGHT PS2	A-
TIGER WOODS PGA GOLF PS	C-

HANDHELD REVIEWS

MARIO TENNIS GBC	B+
MAX STEEL COVERT OPS GBC	B-
POKEMON PUZZLE CHAL. GBC	B



GAME OF THE MONTH



F1 CHAMPIONSHIP

dev./pub.: electronic arts

Again EA makes the PS2 sing with a superb F1 game that has to be seen to be believed, especially the 22-man, motion-captured pit crew.



F1 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON 2000

BY MIKE HOBBES

EA has been making the PS2 fly lately. FIFA 2001, Madden, and now an amazing game of Formula One continues the charge.

I knew I was in for something special with this game the first time I braked hard and flicked my way down through the gears into the first corner at Melbourne. For there it was, that sound that I've been longing for and that's been missing from every single Formula One game in memory. I'm referring to that distinctive, guttural crackle emitted from the real cars as they downshift. It's an unmistakable part of the F1 experience, and it's just one of the many things that makes

this game, for the time being, the most complete expression of F1 on console.

To start with the obvious, EA have done a remarkable job at graphically interpreting this technically demanding motorsport on PS2. We've seen the broad-strokes before, most notably in Video Systems' Dreamcast F1 game, but here, we get the minutiae, and it's

amazing. You can see the driver tear-offs on their helmets, the rear view mirrors work, pull into the pits and marvel at a full 22-man motion captured pit crew. You'll even see them replacing the nose piece should you happen to shear off the front wing during an optimistic overtaking maneuver. And though we almost expect it these days, it's still quite a feat that a game with such uncompromising track layouts exhibits not one trace of pop-up.

Top marks also go to the game's sound. In addition to that oh-so-satisfying crackle, there is an overall energy level that has been captured here that is intoxicating. Sitting in a full grid at the start while 22 engines rev up is a real treat with a surround system, and when you're flat out in this game, like in the epic straight of the Nürburgring, the engines are absolutely screaming with a vigor and electricity heretofore unmatched. Trust me, it is sound you will get addicted to.

Whether you become addicted to the game itself is another question. As an avid F1 fan, I get a lot out of this game, more than someone without the slightest inkling of what a Jenson Button or a McLaren MP4-15 is, but

FOR A TASTE OF THE KIND OF DETAIL LAVISHED ON THIS GAME, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE INCREDIBLY RENDERED PIT STOPS. A FULL, 22-MAN CREW RUNS OUT TO SERVICE YOUR CAR, CHANGING TIRES, ADDING FUEL, EVEN REPLACING BROKEN BITS OF BODYWORK.





does that render the game without merit for non fans? Well, no, but an extra measure of patience is required to understand the pleasure inherent in this style of racing. To compete with the CPU at medium and above difficulty levels takes memorization, discipline, and concentration. Sound fun? Maybe not, but stick with it and the rewards are there. Finding that perfect turn-in point and accelerating hard out of the corner, the outer wheels just nipping the curbing, is an experience that you will probably come to love. And from here, you can start to enjoy the deeper elements of the game, like advanced car set up and playing with a lot of laps and using pit strategy. And EA have done the appropriate thing in that they haven't gone overboard with the game's physical difficulty. Though you can get caught out by snap oversteer and wheelspin, the cars are far enough away from the knife edge that the game never takes on the dreaded feeling of a dry, unfeeling sim.

But for all its strengths, there is some room for improvement. One of the toughest things for any F1 game to recreate is the Monaco street circuit, and while visually it is handled superbly here, processing strain becomes evident as cars bunch up through the hairpins, very nearly grinding to a halt. Reality, during these rare occasions, is unceremoniously sapped. And there are curious and slightly frustrating omissions, like the inability to artificially advance the clock in the qualifying sessions in order to get an idea of what a pole time looks like.

Looking at the big picture, these are very minor complaints, but when you're dealing with such a superlative effort, you have no recourse but to nit pick. Otherwise, this is without question the best Formula One game I've ever played in that it comes closer than any other to capturing the audio/visual excitement of a Grand Prix weekend. Just what I've been waiting for the PS2 to do. **GR**



REPUBLIC SAYS...

- ABSOLUTELY AMAZING AMOUNT OF DETAIL
- THE BEST F1 SOUND EFFECTS YET ATTEMPTED

- FULL 2000 SEASON, INCLUDING NEW INDIANAPOLIS CIRCUIT
- APPROPRIATE DIFFICULTY LEVEL

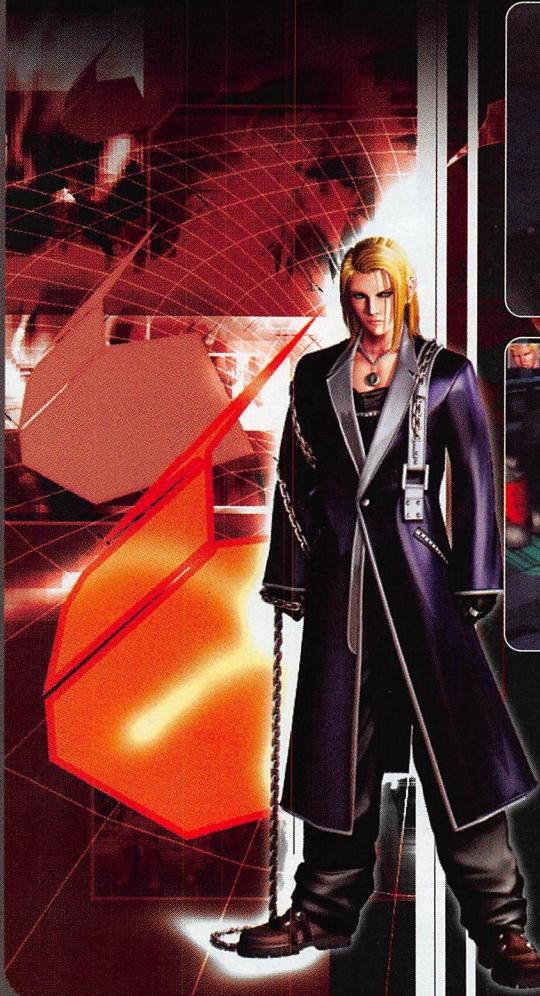
THE SINGLE MOST ENJOYABLE F1 GAME I'VE EVER PLAYED, EA'S CRACK AT THIS TOUGH-TO-RECREATE SPORT IS TRULY IMPRESSIVE. FOR F1 FANS, AN OBVIOUS MUST HAVE.



THE BOUNCER

BY MIKE HOBBS

Square and Dream Factory craft one of the PS2's most beautiful games yet, leaving no doubt as to the system's power

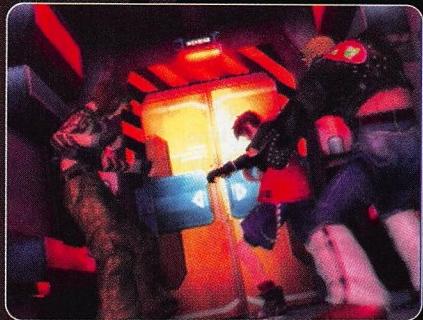


The Bouncer has been through a roller coaster ride of ever expanding and shrinking expectations. When this 3D action/fighter was first shown at the Tokyo Game Show, its still-fresh, Matrix-like freeze frames and dramatic use of interactive environments stunned the press and gaming public alike. And the fact that the game was being developed in cooperation with Dream Factory, makers of the grossly underappreciated Tobal series, only served to whet the appetite further.

But some time later, things started to go a little awry. A spate of delays and worrisome reports that the interactive backgrounds had been excised left many wondering if Square might have a lemon on its hands. This sentiment only gained momentum when at every single turn, the press was denied the chance to play the game, even when it was obviously very far along. What was going on here?

Then finally, on the eve of the Japanese release, Square sent us a final, reviewable copy of the game, giving me and every one else their first real indication of exactly what The Bouncer is. And what it is is a jaw-droppingly gorgeous cinematic beat 'em up: nothing more, nothing less.

Indeed, The Bouncer may be one of the most amazing-looking games ever made, a fact which goes a long way towards enhancing its solid, vaguely Tobal-like fighting engine, which, truth be told, doesn't get all that much of a workout. This is because of the game's highly cinematic structure, which is dominated more by stunning FMV and mind-numbing, real-time cinemas than by



actual fighting. If you've ever played *Sword of the Berserk*, you'll be familiar with this balance.

In *The Bouncer*, you fight maybe six enemies at a time within a fairly confined environment before the game goes off and does what it really seems to want to do, and that is wow you with the PS2's real-time rendering capabilities and Square's monumental CG skills. But thankfully, short and sporadic as the actual fighting may be, it is quite satisfying, and Dream Factory has sprinkled enough good ideas around to make the game (which in Story mode is about an hour long), very replayable.

One of the best of these ideas is a level-up system, where you can learn new moves and power-up your character after every major battle. And once you complete the game, you can go back and play through with your leveled-up character, making subsequent plays far more fun and satisfying than the first. Also welcome is the ability to change your

character at almost any point in the game, which can lead to slightly different situations and scenarios, again giving good reason to play through the game more than once. And tire of this, and there is a four-player battle mode, that, while obviously not as deep as a dedicated fighting game, certainly adds value.

My biggest gripe with *The Bouncer*, however, is a lack of variety in the enemies during Story mode, where there are really only about six or seven different types, none of which display anything special in the AI department. Even the bosses are a bit lame, as they are generally nothing more than human sized opponents with a couple of fancy moves.

The Bouncer isn't the redefinition of beat 'em ups that many hoped it would be. Rather, it's an amazing-looking extrapolation of a tried and true idea, one that will get by on its staggering beauty as much as anything else. **GR**



■ SIMPLY ONE OF THE BEST-LOOKING REAL-TIME GAMES EVER
■ VERY SOLID AND SATISFYING FIGHTING ENGINE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

■ ACTION CONSTANTLY INTERRUPTED BY BEAUTIFUL CINEMAS
■ ACTION CONSTANTLY INTERRUPTED BY BEAUTIFUL CINEMAS

THIS IS A VERY CINEMATIC GAME, SO MUCH SO THAT SOME MAY BE TURNED OFF BY THE CONSTANT BREAKS IN THE ACTION. BUT GOOD LORD, IS THIS GAME INCREDIBLE LOOKING.



MEGA MAN X5

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Charge up the X-buster and polish off the Z-sabre. Mega Man and Zero are back to take down Sigma one more time



Let me start this review of *Mega Man X5* with a disclaimer. This is a *Mega Man* game. If you never liked the inspired shooting/platform action of this legendary series or have grown tired of seeing X whuppin' Sigma's butt or just can't stand a game that's not in 3D, then this won't do anything for you. However, if you still appreciate great design, strong gameplay and finger-cramping action, then know that *Mega Man X5* is an excellent addition to one of gaming's premiere franchises.

It's not some sort of strange mistake that's allowed *Mega Man* to spawn so many sequels; it's because the games are that damn good. There's just something incredibly fun about charging through the horizontally and vertically scrolling levels, destroying enemies with your X-buster (or sword if you fight as Zero) and avoiding traps as you make your way to the big animal-inspired mech boss at the end. The time off since the last X game has been well spent, as Capcom has refined their design skills and crafted some fantastic levels, filled with all-new obstacles like doors rigged with shot-activated locks, and waves of

lava that vaporize you instantly unless you manage to secure one of the few safe spots in time. The new moves, including the ability to hang from wires and the ability to crouch, add new excitement to the game, but even better are the power-up suits you can acquire. If you choose X as your main character, then you get the *Mega Man X4* armor straight from the get-go, plus you can get even better powers: the Falcon Armor for flight and the Gaea Armor that can walk on spikes. You can even customize the suits with extra enhancements.

As is usually the case for *Mega Man*, the game looks great, sounds great and controls wonderfully. I have a bit of a list of could-haves and should-haves, including anime cutscenes, better special effects and boss names that don't sound like they're from Sesame Street (Duff McWhalen, anybody?), and Capcom didn't flesh out the story as much as I had expected (though the tie-ins to the past are way cool), but it hardly dulls that special excitement that the game delivers every time I play. It's pure fun, plain and simple. **GR**



■ STILL ONE OF THE BEST GAME CONCEPTS EVER.

■ GREAT LEVEL DESIGN

■ NEW ARMOR SUITS AND CUSTOM POWER-UPS.

■ LAME BOSS NAMES. WEAK STORY.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

CLASSIC MEGA MAN IN 2D, JUST LIKE IT SHOULD BE. LIFE IS GOOD. HOPEFULLY THIS ISN'T THE LAST WE'LL SEE OF X.

B+

Forget what you thought you knew about RPGs. Enter a surreal world of sci-fi and drama in Persona 2

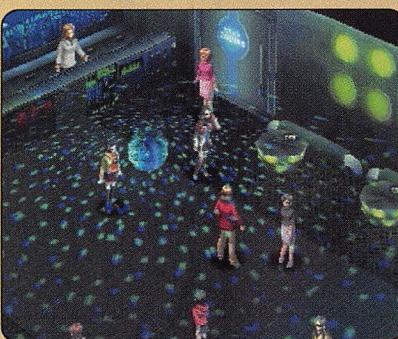
Persona 2 is a rare breed of game. It takes a conventional genre, it breaks all the rules, and surprisingly, it works. The prequel aside, Persona 2 is thoroughly unique in a number of ways. For one, it's one of the few RPGs out there with a contemporary sci-fi story. Set in the real world, Persona 2 mixes mystery with mythology and questions the human psyche. It's not psychological horror by any stretch, but it makes you think.

Persona 2 also excels with its great characters. Just from looking at them, you can tell these aren't your average RPG characters, and the fantastically unique designs are backed up by intriguing personalities filled with mystery and conflict. Some of the game's best moments come from the banter between the characters. In fact, the whole script is decidedly adult and well-written; four-letter words aren't uncommon, but it's not gratuitous either.

Meanwhile, mechanics like conversing with monsters, acquiring various

personas, and spreading rumors to build up the game world keep the play interesting. In fact, the only real problem with Persona 2 lies in the battles. First of all, the menu system is too cumbersome. Every turn, you essentially have to program a macro for your characters if you want to succeed, and it's pretty tedious. Second, there are numerous moments in the game where you'll have to spend a few hours building up your levels—that's on top of a fairly high encounter rate. These problems don't ruin the game, but definitely knock it down a notch. If only you gained experience from making contact with monsters instead of killing them, it would increase playability tremendously.

If you're looking for an RPG that's off the beaten path, look no further than Persona 2 - just be warned of the quirks in the battle system. GR



PERSONA 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN



GREAT CONTEMPORARY ADULT SETTING AND STORY
FANTASTIC CHARACTER DESIGN

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THE IN-GAME MAP IS A LIFESAVER
POOR BATTLES AND TOO MANY OF THEM

A CONTEMPORARY SCI-FI RPG? IT'S DIFFERENT AND IT WORKS. TOO BAD THE BATTLES AREN'T AS GOOD AS THE STORY, SETTING AND CHARACTERS.



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

BY DAVE HALVERSON



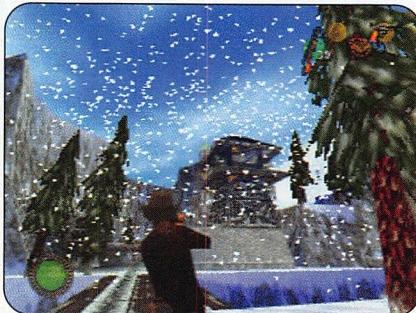
Shades of fortune and glory struggle to seep through Indy's N64 debut... But, due to flawed execution, it's buried as deep as the Arc

Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine isn't so much a product of the popular movie franchise as it is the series that put the implants in Indy: Tomb Raider. Extract one Dr. Jones, drop in Lara and switch soundtracks, and you've got Tomb Raider 64—spinning menus, medpacks and all. Too bad Indy's latest adventure doesn't measure up to Lara's on her worst day. The problems aren't so much in the design, but in the execution. The game is plagued by under-realized play mechanics, sloppy collision, and the worst bug testing I've ever witnessed in a boxed game. For starters, Indy's whip isn't used in real time like a 3D Castlevania, rather, you're prompted when to use it and doing so renders a cutscene. So, what should have been the game's best dynamic is essentially disarmed. The game's other non-Tomb Raider issue, river rafting, is bogged down by unresponsive controls and haphazard collision. If you get hung up on a rock, and you will, the raft usually melts into the polygon, leaving you there until you sink or reset. Getting through the tricky currents could have been a highpoint—it's a great idea, but again, the execution is poor.

As for the standard issue, Tomb Raider-esque platforming in the game, it's good enough, but the lack of footstep samples combined with the iffy collision often lead to more frustration. I tried to walk across a downed plank and Indy melted right through it—skewered like an Indy-kabob; another time an entire room was engulfed in a kaleidoscope of fragmented poly's as I ascended a ladder; and a couple of times the game just flat-out froze. Me thinks Indy needed to cook a little bit longer. In the game's favor (it's still good enough to play through, believe it or not), the menu and weapons system are deeper, and Indy controls more like a straight action character, without the start and

stop that bogs Lara down around corners. Plus, Indy has the cool theme song. So he doesn't look as good bent over...you can't have everything. The game also benefits from being expansion pak-enhanced on the N64. The environments are huge and rarely clip, the textures are good for the system and the camera is usually user friendly. Real speech is nice too, although, Indy doesn't sound so much like Indy. He says dumb stuff like Indy though and looks the part just enough to slide by. The story, set in 1947, finds the Russians snooping around Babylon in search of a machine they believe that King Nebuchanezzar built within the Tower of Babel, 2,600 years ago—a machine with the ability to reach across the dimensions of time and space. So, of course, they want it. This sets the stage for Indy to slip past brain-dead soldiers and infiltrate top-secret installations the world over, using enough stealth to elevate The Infernal Machine above a generic adventure game.

At E3 Indy looked like it might end up one of the N64's very best, but, for whatever reason (I'm pretty sure they rushed it to make the Christmas glut), it didn't happen. There's a great game in here somewhere though, you just have to look under all of its clumsiness to find it. **GR**



■ CLASSIC THEME AND WELL THOUGHT OUT LEVELS
■ HIGH ON ADVENTURE - LOTS TO DO

■ BUGGY AS A FLORIDA SWAMP
■ LACK OF POLISH AROUND

INDY WAS OBVIOUSLY THRUST OUT THE DOOR TO MAKE CHRISTMAS AND IT'S A REAL SHAME. THIS GAME COULD HAVE BEEN A REAL CONTENDER.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

C+

PAPER MARIO

BY MIKE HOBBS

Intelligent Systems had some large shoes to fill with this game, but they come up a couple sizes short



The last dedicated Nintendo 64 Mario game. Sad thought, isn't it? But that's exactly what Paper Mario is destined to become. And while it's not the game I would have chosen to end this era of Mario, it is a delightful adventure that sees off Nintendo's icon just as he was brought into the world, in 2D.

Developed by relative unknowns Intelligent Systems, Paper Mario is a light RPG with enough good ideas and pleasing, clever visuals to overcome a slightly disjointed, if cute, storyline and fairly basic gameplay. Indeed, it's best to look at this game in the same way it looks back at you—through unassuming, candy-colored glasses.

I say this to warn those looking for some sort of epic quest to rival that of the Square developed SNES game, Super Mario RPG. This is a smaller, less demanding game that gets by as much on its visual charm as it does its actual gameplay, at the heart of which is a fun but simplistic turn-based battle system, which like the Square game, incorporates a pleasant level of timing skill. And I like the ability to switch between a selection of partners for Mario, which allows you to do different things in and out of battle, like reaching far off platforms or releasing electric bolts. You can have only one active at a time, but they're all so unique in what they can do that it makes up for the desire to have a true multiparty system.

Unfortunately, the game is ultimately let down by its overriding breeziness. There's



never much tension, just a sort of detached bemusement at the sheer cuteness of everything. Don't get me wrong; this is a very well drawn and enjoyable game, but it never reaches the level of inspiration that we expect from Nintendo or its second parties.

I have to wonder how this game would have turned out had it been developed in house under the close watch of Mr. Miyamoto, or, if Square had again collaborated with Nintendo as they did on the SNES. I can dream, can't I?

GR



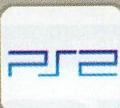
- VERY CUTE, VERY NEAT LOOKING ADVENTURE
- PLEASANT, FUN, BUT BASIC BATTLE SYSTEM

REPUBLIC SAYS...

- STORYLINE LACKS COHESION
- A LITTLE BIT TOO EASY

PAPER MARIO IS A GAME THAT SIMPLY BEGS TO BE LOVED, AND ON A CERTAIN LEVEL, IT WORKS WELL. BUT COMPARED TO THE SNES GAME, IT'S A BIT TOO SMALL IN SCOPE.

B-



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH

review by b. flechter • dev/pub: electronic arts • avail: now



The World Is Not Enough has been compared to Rare's groundbreaking GoldenEye. Fair enough: both games are first-person shooters, in which you use guns to shoot bad guys who shoot back; both games star James Bond; and both games are incredibly engaging.

The World Is Not Enough is its own game, exciting and hugely entertaining, skillfully constructed and magnificently staged. The action is fierce, typical of the best examples in the genre, but the way the levels are built and the placement of objects and the enemy elevates the intensity, pushing the level of immersion beyond most FPS games. Following the storyline of the movie on which it is based, The World Is Not Enough uses the bond theme to fine effect, creating a visually captivating universe. The game does a superb job of forming a convincing sense of space and authentic location; this doesn't feel like a trek through lev-

els as much as it does a spy mission into intriguing real-world settings.

As Bond, the general idea is to infiltrate and carry out such surreptitious tasks as tapping phones, snatching documents and photographing secrets. Every mission seems more enjoyable than the last; I really liked the stealth sequence, where Bond sneaks around the dark grounds of a mansion, picking off guards through windows with stun darts and disabling security cameras. And the claustrophobic search and rescue in a sub was especially intense. Enemies don't necessarily display the most devious intelligence, but their complex reaction to Bond's shots and their excellent animation give them an extra layer of believability: guards tumble off balconies, struggle on the ground, hang from a ledge, dart behind walls. Everything in The World Is Not Enough comes together with precision and great skill, forming one of the year's biggest surprises. **GR**

THUNDER TANKS

review by b. flechter • dev./pub: 3do • avail: now



Thunder Tanks looks and feels like it was cobbled together in a few months, sloppily constructed with little more ambition than to capture a handful of hungry early PlayStation 2 adopters. It is as poor in its conception as it is its execution.

Thunder Tanks moves with the speed and flurry of a first-person shooter, and the tanks you're commanding control well enough, but the action is so haphazardly staged that the game immediately degenerates into a pointless demolition exercise. The setting is the crumbling future, a time when arena tank combat is a brutal sport for people to watch on television. Travelling around

the world to generic arenas that have little to do with their location (and barely pass *Intro to Effective Level Design 101*), your goals are to capture the flag, destroy, claim territory. All this could work at least on the most rudimentary level, but 3DO couldn't even



THEME PARK R.C.

review by s. akinmuso • dev: bullfrog • pub: electronic arts • avail: now



So maybe PC ports aren't such a bad thing on the next-gen machines. Theme Park Roller Coaster doesn't have much in the way of incredible frames per second, reflective surfaces, or bit-mapping gibberish, but what does impress is the fact that the consoles have always been bad at managing dizzying amounts of data. Feed the old processors too many numbers to track, and we get tell-tale slowdown at best, whole sections omitted from games at worst. Theme Park Roller Coaster on the PlayStation 2 is a bold statement that all of those aged problems are prehistoric. Based on the premise that gamers manage a theme park they build from scratch, it's embarrassingly addictive to build a park, make decisions on how many retail stores to place therein, and even make calls on food cost and how much fat to take out of it. In fact, this ideal of monarchist micro-management is fun on every conceivable level. Build your roller coaster and tweak it such that it moves faster or slower based on your real-time grasp of geometry and good sense. Play good boss or devil's advocate - it's your call - so engrossing is it to hire and fire and affect the simulated lives of patrons and employees in your virtual world. The PS2 deciphers this data on the fly without breaking a noticeable sweat. This game isn't for everyone. Quirky at best, Theme Park has a PC cult following for a reason. If you're looking for depth out of the norm, this comes highly recommended. Your PS2 needs it. **GR**





オールフォーマット リビュー

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all-format reviews

PROJECT JUSTICE

review by c. hoffman • dev/pub: capcom • avail: now



Sure, Capcom is the master of fighting games, but for some reason their 3D fighters have never packed the same punch as the 2D ones. This hasn't changed with Project Justice. If you're a fan of Rival Schools then you'll love this game, but for anyone else, the numerous flaws conspire to make the experience less fun than it should be, despite a fairly solid engine and loads of characters and moves. First on the list of problems is the stiff nature of the game. The characters move with all the fluidity of tree stumps, which provides a dull, clunky experience. Second is the rather uninteresting combo system. Based heavily on air juggles and chain attacks, the combos are too easy to do, too hard to escape, and too central to gameplay to leave room for lots of enjoyment. Next are the characters, which include fighters based on various sports and other extracurricular activities. I don't know about you, but I'd rather be playing as some bad-ass like Guile or a butt-kicking babe like Chun-Li than a school photographer. The characters are decidedly goofy, but the disjointed story-

line takes itself way too seriously for the game to qualify as wacky fun. I'll give props to the cool team-up attacks, excellent control and good graphics and music, but overall this isn't the company's best effort. Pardon the obvious play on words, but this game hardly does justice to Capcom's great fighting lineage. GR



POD: SPEEDZONE

review by s. akinnuso • dev: ubi soft romania • pub: ubi soft • avail: now



Playing online against other players is a fantastic feature that should be incorporated into as many games as possible, but it shouldn't be the only reason to play a game. Such is the case, however, with UBI's horrible Pod: Speedzone, and even that excuse wears thin after a few hours suffering through it. Truth is, it's tough to fault the game on ambition. Like some fusion of Speed Devils and Mad Max, the game has you taking futuristic cars and pounding your way through several hopelessly bland levels indicating dystopian new-year landscapes. Every bit by the numbers, there's your rocky terrain stage, your cityscape track, your trippy tunnel sequence—none in any way push the Dreamcast to boundaries a RAM-equipped N64 couldn't reach. Too-sensitive controls and a rushed release rip the last shred of enjoyment from this game. Far too often you'll find yourself rebounding off both walls and cars, trying to keep your skittery, loose vehicle facing forward to finish the race. Crashing into oncoming walls and falling through glitches in tracks screams of bad code, and while racing against blokes from around the world (this is the only international console network game available) is smashing fun for about ten minutes or so, those meddlesome quirks that make the one-player game a bore make the usually inviting competitive experience a total snooze. GR



ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM

review by c. hoffman • dev: paradox • pub: mattel • avail: now



Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots Arena is sort of a kids' version of Tekken. A lot of the same elements are there – emphasis on hand-to-hand combat, four attack buttons that correspond to a different part of the body, precise controls and a quasi-3D fighting system. Not to say that this good-looking game is a copycat. It has loads of original elements, not the least being the ability to win or buy new body parts which yield different attacks. A lack of special moves decreases the excitement, but it's still fun. Kids will probably enjoy it most. GR



DRIVING EMOTION S

review by m. hobbs • dev: escape • pub: square • avail: now



Poor Type S. When it was originally released in Japan, Gran Turismo 3 was nowhere in sight, leaving it the only game in town for sim style licensed racing. And as the initial software library was so scant in Japan, it wasn't too hard to endure the ludicrous physics model simply to enjoy the mostly nice graphics.

The climate isn't so forgiving in America: Gran Turismo 3 is only a few months away, there are more and better games to choose from, and contrary to previous reports, Square has done little to correct the awful handling in Driving Emotion Type S. I tolerated this for a lack of anything better to play on the Japanese PS2, but several months on, I cannot for the life of me fathom what developers Escape were thinking when they concocted this physics engine. Not only does it feel like you're driving on ice, but the cars always feel like they're about two steps behind your control inputs. This is a criminal offense on two fronts: there's no realism and there's no satisfaction. So why play it? And things are not made any easier by interminable load times.

The fact that there is an extra track in the American version doesn't really add anything to the experience, and it's only in some neat visuals that the game holds any sort of value whatsoever. Just wait for Gran Turismo 3. You'll thank me. GR



Ten people locked in a house with no GR...



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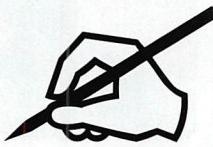
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PORTABLE GAMING ANALYSIS

games mobilized

Mario Tennisdev: camelot • pub: nintendo • avail: now
reviewed by mike "baofu" hobbs

B+

See if you can predict the pattern here. Mario Golf on N64: great. Mario Golf on Game Boy: great. Mario Tennis on N64: great. Mario Tennis on Game Boy? Guess what. It's great. Truly just a shrunken version of the awesome "full size" version, Mario Tennis GB is every bit as fun and addictive, just smaller.

Like its big brother, the gameplay here is fantastic. Using a combination of button taps and holds, you can execute a good number of differ-

ent swings, and the ball collision is just forgiving enough to make the game exciting and frustration free without feeling overly easy or sloppy. The fun mini-games make a welcome showing as well, and with the use of the N64 transfer pak and a copy of Mario Tennis on N64, you can access otherwise unavailable characters.

So no surprises here really, just a terrific portable game of tennis, probably the best ever made. GR

**CROC 2**dev: natsume • pub: thq • avail: january
reviewed by c. hoffman

It seems like ages ago that Croc 2 was first announced for Game Boy Color, but the platformer that PS and PC owners have been playing for months is finally ready for its handheld debut. Well, not exactly the same game that was on PS. Obviously the game has been scaled down to be a 2D side-scroller, but players will still have a number of moves, like the tail whip and stomp attack, to guide Croc through the game's four worlds. The first Croc turned out pretty well on Game Boy; hopefully this will follow suit. GR

**Action Man**dev: natsume • pub: thq • avail: january
reviewed by c. hoffman

Action Man, the distant cousin of G.I. Joe, is fighting his way to Game Boy Color. Action Man is a side-scrolling action game based on the toy and TV show, where players go up against the evil Dr. X. The game will include 15 levels, including arctic, underground, jungle and moon stages, and players will be able to use numerous weapons and power-up suits along the way. Natsume is doing the programming work on this one, so it should at least be fairly decent. GR

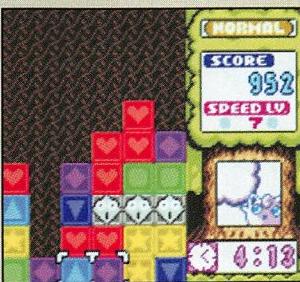
**Pokemon Puzzle Challenge**dev: intelligent systems • pub: nintendo • avail: now
reviewed by mike "baofu" hobbs

B

Unlike many of its potential buyers, I didn't enjoy this game as a Pokemon experience. I guess I'm too old to get into the kids' latest drug of choice, but that didn't dampen the fun of Pokemon Puzzle Challenge.

Granted, there's plenty of Pokemon buffoonery I won't pretend to understand going on here, but the game itself, a version of Tetris Attack,

is great. Matching colors by swapping two blocks in the horizontal plane is all there is to it, but begin to set up chains and pure addiction is in the offing. And plenty of play modes help matters along, making it a perfect portable puzzle game experience. Just don't let the little Pikachu on the box scare you away. GR

**max steel: covert operations**dev: torus games • pub: mattel interactive • avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

B-

Max Steel is an action-adventure game that doesn't jump out and grab you, but winds up being surprisingly enjoyable the more you play it. Two main features keep Max Steel from falling into the trap of mediocrity that most licensed Game Boy games are caught in: the ability to switch into Max's enhanced modes at any time, and the variety of gameplay. Aside from normal old Max Steel, players can switch to a powered-up mode at any time, with super strength and super agility, or into invisible mode (which will stop enemies from shooting at you, but doesn't actually stop damage). Max's alternate modes are used for getting past obstacles and enemies, but

the catch is there's a power meter, so you have to use your powers with care. The other nice aspect is the variety of missions. Most levels are side-scrolling adventure, but with varied goals - find bombs within a time limit, rescue a prisoner, search and destroy, etc. Other levels are completely different, such as an underwater exploration stage, or an aerial shooting stage reminiscent of Gradius. At first the action seems strictly average (especially with Max's lame hand-to-hand combat skills), but once the variety kicks in the game can get fun. Some control and collision issues keep Max Steel from being really good, but it's still not bad, especially if you're a Steel fan. GR





After playing this brand-spanking new Konami basketball engine (Konami's been making b-ball games since NES), my love affair with the NBA Live franchise is in jeopardy. In ESPN NBA 2Night, from the opening video sequence to the final buzzer, all the elements work together in a complete, nearly flawless package. This game is so well produced that the only thing that really kept it from receiving a perfect A score was the obscure free throw mechanism, some AI rebounding issues, and some serious collision detection in certain camera perspectives and some replays, like players completely going through others. But with everything else working so effortlessly, these problems are easily forgotten.

Graphically, the look and shine is in the same league (if not a bit more polished) as NBA 2K1 for DC and PS2 NBA Live, although the faces are more cartoony here. The player control and ball control passing are excellent. The dunks and slams are great, knocking down feeble defenders who get in your way. And once you get the strategy plays down and start configuring your set plays, it takes the game to a whole other level.

I'm not a big Brent Musberger fan, but I'll have to admit that he calls a really good game here, with his ESPN color man Stuart Scott at his side. There must be a pretty good library of sound clips in the game's audio library, because there are hardly any repetitive comments. On the music front, from beginning to end, the soundtrack complements the game and can become infectious at times.

But separating it from the rest of the pack, NBA 2Night has brilliant personality: The echo of the bouncing ball ringing through the court and the sound it makes as it tip-toes around the rim before dropping; cameramen sitting under the basket moving their heads and cameras with the action; the coaches walking and the bench players reacting with emotion on the sidelines; concession vendors walking up and down aisles selling their wares; the way the scoreboard score changes by flipping the number over as if Vanna White herself was sitting courtside. This game so completely brings you into the experience of being at a game, the only thing missing is cheerleaders break-dancing at halftime.

The opponent AI is solid. Even though it's going against you, to watch the opponents' big man steal the ball and throw it halfway down the court to his speedy guard on a fast break is quite exciting.

The game includes the most advanced camera system of any sports game with the ability to put the camera in 10 different posi-



tions and control not only by zoom and height, but also by field of view. You can change the camera to right behind (or in front of for that matter) the player, but it's not very logical as you lose sight of the rest of the players, which is especially difficult on defense. Or you can go back into the nose-bleed seats and have a view of the entire court as well as all the sign-holding, camera-flashing fans on the other side.

There is a slight clumsiness when the players lunge forward to try to steal the ball on the run, but the other defensive moves are all well done. The arms actually try to wrap around the other players to steal the ball or they flail in the air to deny passing lanes and, if timed right, pulling off a blocked shot sends a chill down the spine—especially with Shaq. You can even hard foul a guy going up for a dunk and watch him fall on his ass.

The front-end menu system is chock full of goodness and has an easy-to-use interface, always with a tip to help those too confused. On the Team Select screen, you can cycle through a wide variety of team statistics to see where the team places in such categories as Inside Shot, Blocks, and ESPN Power Rankings. There are three different AI settings—auto, half and manual—depending on how much control you want the CPU to have over your team. For those who like to take the game off of Arcade mode and get dialed into the simulation aspect of the sport, you can go to the Strategy Settings option and choose two offensive and two defensive set plays from a healthy list of plays. And, while there, with a press of a button, you can watch the plays execute on screen with the ball and the Xs and Os moving around into their positions.

A little less than a year ago, a Konami of America publicist said that one of the goals of their ESPN the Games line of games was to dethrone the EA Sports juggernaut. They're off to a great start. If you play basketball games and have a PS2, you must get this title so that when it blows up big, years from now you can say that you were there from the beginning. **GR**

  **gamers' republic sports**

 **ESPN NBA 2 NIGHT**

<i>by: m. puccini dev: kcei pub: konami america available: now</i>	<i>Initially, I had to look hard to find problems with this amazing debut engine. If you have a PS2, and like b-ball, you need this game.</i>
--	---

A-

Watching the frisky Sacramento Kings guard Jason Williams steal the ball, sprint to the hoop and jam it home has never looked so good as it does in NBA Live 2001. I've been awaiting this title to see if it'll be to basketball games what the PS2 Madden is to the football genre, and so far it is.

The models in Live 2001 are super clean with textures nicely faking muscle definition, and the faces and hair are perfect or a close approximation of each player.

Another highly noticeable overall advancement is that, with PS basketball games, the players always got muddled when in traffic with the CPU not being able to keep the collision detection tight and it was hard to follow your guy. Not so anymore, lending to a tremendously fast-paced game. Speaking of the speed, I really like the addition of the turbo bar under each player, not new to the genre but to the Live series. The control is the classic, tight Live offering.

My anticipation for the final review copy has indeed been heightened to see if EA can deliver the total package. **GR**



gamers' republic sports

NBA LIVE 2001

by: m. puccini
dev: ea sports
pub: ea
available: winter

The NBA Live series is finally ready to show its stuff on the PS2 and, as expected, it will not disappoint. Both new players and Live loyalists alike will enjoy.

We're not quite sure why Konami sent us this version of ESPN MLS ExtraTime, except to maybe let us know that they had a soccer game in development.

Because this version of the game not only serves up a really basic round of soccer with none of the flair or bells-and-whistles found in FIFA 2001, but the game also occasionally completely freezes up, ending any momentum being gained. There are AI issues to be addressed and audio issues and pretty much all of the gameplay needs refining. Oh, and there is only one camera angle to chose from in this build.

What is promising and gives hope is that the game runs on the famed Konami International Superstar Soccer engine that was highly acclaimed on the N64. This new iteration will include improved character models taking the ISS engine through its paces, six different modes of play (we only had one available), ESPN's sports broadcasting flavor, and a Spanish-speaking option with popular announcer Luis "Gooooaaaaalllll" Tapia. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

ESPN MLS EXTRATIME

by: m. puccini
dev: kcei
pub: konami
available: march

Konami's stellar International Superstar Soccer engine is being developed for the PS2. We'll soon find out if it can battle the glory that is FIFA 2001.



Golf has got to be the genre in the whole video game kingdom with the least amount of competition. After all, it is golf. The personality of the characters and the challenging mini-games in Hot Shots Golf and Mario Golf at least make an attempt to mask the tedium that is the Gentleman's Sport.

Although there is a graphical improvement over last year, Eldrick Woods...I mean, Tiger Woods PGA is still your basic, no-frills golf sim. Probably the coolest thing about the game is during putting when you press the L1 button to check the slopes and angles of the green, it curves and elevates and is accompanied by an earthquake-like rumble. The least favored aspect of the game is the uninspired, trite comments Tiger makes after shots. An effort was made to speed up the play in this version and was accomplished as an 18-hole round can be completed in about 15 minutes, give or take a few minutes.

The bottom line here is that if you like golf and already have HSG or MG, you don't need this one. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

TIGER WOODS GOLF

by: m. puccini
dev: ea sports
pub: ea
available: now

Not exactly the most exciting game in the industry, Tiger Woods fails because of a lack of any personality and first-gen gameplay.

C-

The first hardball game out of the gate this year is Sammy Sosa's High Heat 2002. This is my first go-round with the series, and overall, HH is actually a pretty good, be it barebones, engine.

There is still much work to be done on the game, but its strongest asset at this point is its solid player control in the field and the decent pitching interface. I also give props to the unique replays of a strikeout pitch where the ball is frozen at various spots in its path from the pitcher to the plate.

With blocky models and faceless players, the graphics are obviously still in development. As of yet, there is no first base/third base runner windows—which I heartily enjoy and think should be standard in all baseball games. There was only

one stadium available and not all of the modes were available, but I did spend some time in both Home Run Derby and Batting Practice modes.

With a major graphics overhaul, and some added flair, this can be a serious baseball contender. **GR**



gamers' republic sports

HIGH HEAT BASEBALL

by: m. puccini
dev: 3do
pub: 3do
available: march

High Heat Baseball has its work cut out for it in the baseball arena, but with some serious improvements to this version, the game could come out swinging for the fences.



RADIANT SILVERGUN

[publisher] esp
 [genre] shooter
 [system] sega saturn
 [year] 1998

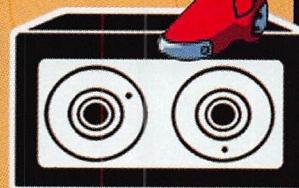
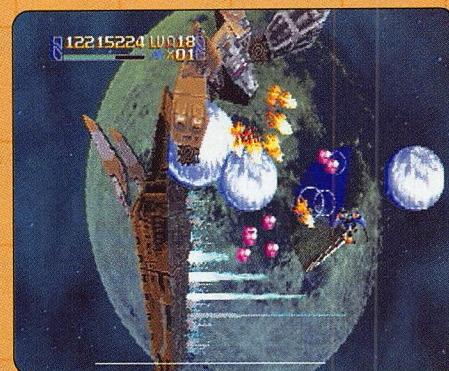
It isn't often that you can comfortably call something the best of its kind. Outside of, say, a Fabregé egg (tell me, who makes a better egg?), any "best of" declaration is open to numerous qualifications and matters of personal preference. But there exists a game that is by such a great margin the most unequivocal example of its genre that it can be safely called the best of its kind.

I am of course referring to Treasure's brilliantly named Radiant Silvergun, the most inspired, visually accomplished, and addictive overhead shooter ever made for the Saturn (or any other system, for that matter). One need only look at the game's weapon system to see the open-minded game design artistry of Treasure at work. You are given seven vastly different weapons, all accessible at any time, introducing gobs of technique into the gameplay. Throwing shooter convention out the window, you don't chase after power-ups, but instead increase the level of your weapons by using them effectively. And the game saves your level, so every time you play, the more powerful you become and the farther you get in the game. This simple idea brings the replayability of the game to previously unimaginable heights for a shooter. The more you play, the more fun it becomes. Shouldn't every game be like this?

Like Super Mario 64, Radiant Silvergun was also a game that perfectly suited its host hardware's strengths. Its brilliant mix of vast, 2D planes and perfectly executed polygonal and transparency work renders it an absolutely stunning-looking game, even by today's elevated standards.

The only thing more astounding than the game itself is the fact that it was never released in the U.S. A true crime, as it meant that Radiant Silvergun became the province of hardcore importers only. A planned PlayStation version (which is rumored to have been almost complete) never saw the light of day, which firmly put the game out of reach to most. But use your resources and track this game down.

Its historical significance cannot be ignored. —MICHAEL HOBBS



gr001

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WORLD REPUBLIC

The PlayStation, Gameboy, and Nintendo 64 continued to occupy the top 10 spots in December with the new color Wonder Swan making a bid with its dedicated pint sized Final Fantasy. Only two PS2 games and one DC title appear in Japan's top twenty while In the US we're falling all over each other for a PS2 fix. Hmmm, are we missing something? Imagine what those GB Advance sales are going to sell like!.



WORLD REPUBLIC TOP TWENTY

WORLD REPUBLIC TOP TWENTY

* BASED ON GAMES SOLD DECEMBER 6 THROUGH DECEMBER 13

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| 2. DUEL MONSTERS 4 YUGI | GB 12. RPG TSUKOOL | PS |
| 3. DUEL MONSTERS 4 KAIBA | GB 13. JUSTICE SCHOOL | DC |
| 4. DUEL MONSTERS 4 JYOUNOUCHI | GB 14. FIST OF THE NORTH STAR | PS |
| 5. MARIO PARTY 3 | N64 15. MARIO TENNIS 64 | N64 |
| 6. DRAGON QUEST | GB 16. SIN MEGAMITENSEI | GB |
| 7. FINAL FANTASY RPG | WS 17. CUSTOM ROBOT | N64 |
| 8. ROCKMAN X | PS 18. MEGAMITENSEI | GB |
| 9. MARIO TENNIS | GB 19. FIFA 2001 | PS2 |
| 10. BANJO-TOOIE | N64 20. GUITAR FREAKS 3RD MIX | PS2 |

WORLD REPUBLIC FRONTLINES



NEW PS2 BUNDLE INCLUDES REMOTE-BUT STILL NO LOJAK

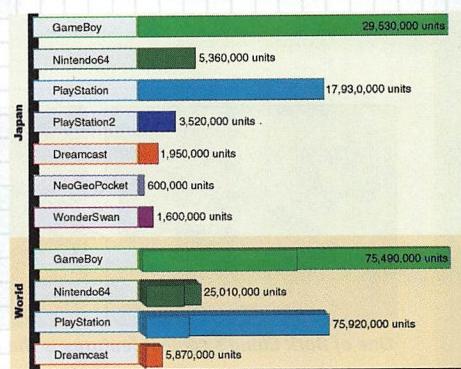
On December 8, Sony released a new PlayStation 2 bundle that includes the company's official DVD remote in place of the previous bundle's 8MB memory card. Much to the surprise of the Japanese press, long lines formed in front of popular game shops in Shinjuku and Akihabara as folks waited anxiously to get their hands on the newly packaged hardware. In front of Yodobashi Camera (one of the biggest home electronics stores) for instance, about 100 people were already lined up by 9:30 a.m., and by 11:00 a.m., all of the new PS2 bundles were sold out. As of December 20, it is still extremely difficult to find one available. In light of the DVD remote's popularity, the question must be asked whether the PS2 is primarily viewed by consumers as a DVD player or a game console.

I WONDER IF WE'LL GET THE SWAN IN COLOR?

Just one day after the release of the new PlayStation 2 bundle, Bandai launched the WonderSwan Color. Perhaps the biggest attraction of this new handheld is the remake of Square's original Final Fantasy. Available separately or packed-in with the hardware, Final Fantasy features upgraded graphics that take advantage of the color portable's power. As expected, long lines formed in front of most game shops in Shinjuku on the morning of December 9, but after about 20 minutes most of the lines dissipated before the WSC had even sold out. The reason? Most people wanted the limited edition package that included Final Fantasy, but most shops received small quantities and were only able to fulfill pre-orders.



WORLDWIDE HARDWARE CHARTS





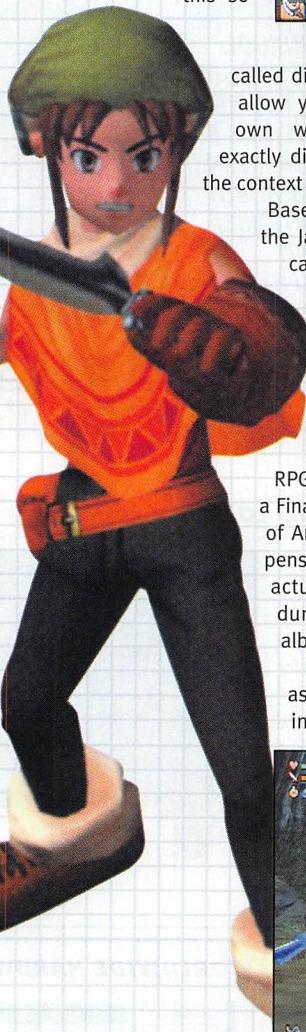
sony playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Preview • developer level five • publisher sony • available in japan now

DARK CLOUD

The PS2's first RPG. That's a little cause for celebration. Especially as footage of Dark Cloud was one of the world's first glimpses at what the PS2 could do when Sony unveiled the system at the Tokyo Game Show in 1999.

Now, Dark Cloud is upon us, at least in Japan, and finally some questions can be answered about a game that most really couldn't get a handle on. We all knew that this so-

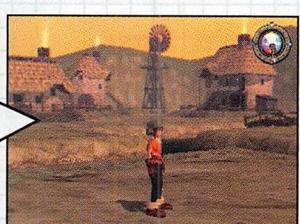
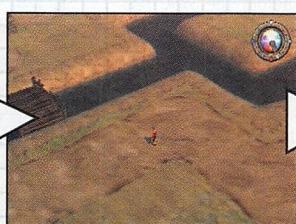
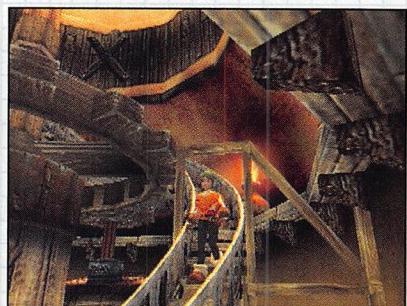
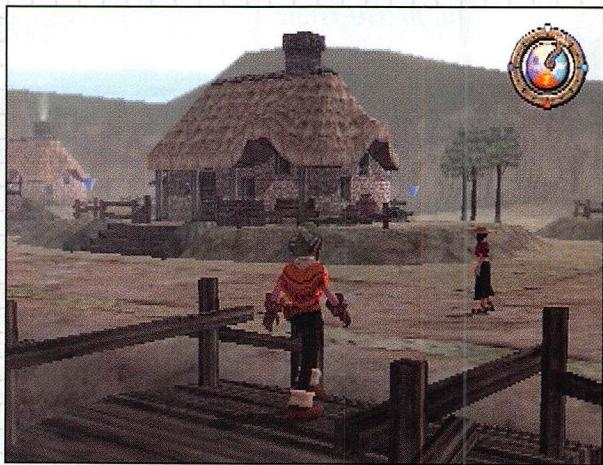


called diorama RPG would allow you to build your own worlds, but how exactly did this play out in the context of the game itself?

Based on my time with the Japanese release, I can report that the idea turns out to be a good one, though you should abandon notions of Dark Cloud being a "proper" RPG along the lines of a Final Fantasy or Skies of Arcadia. As it happens, this is at its heart actually a random dungeon adventure, albeit with a twist.

The diorama aspect is the most interesting portion

of the game, and I'll get to this shortly, but there are some features of the dungeons which bear noting. First, monster combat is real time, and there are some mostly successful attempts at interesting design, like weapons that level up and take damage whenever they are used against enemies, and this idea that you have to keep this cache of water filled up or your character dies. Always draining as you move about (or even stand still), you refill your supply by locating these amazing-looking pools of water. We've seen rudimentary



One of Dark Cloud's coolest features is the ability to check your town's progress by moving in and out of the diorama mode instantly.

water physics before, but in Dark Cloud, we are seeing something new in that the surface of the water actually distorts the polygons beneath it. Stand your character in the pool, and you'll marvel at the sight of his legs warping behind this wavy veil of water. It's most impressive.

As is the overall look of the game, which benefits greatly from the high-res, high-fps gloss of a properly developed PS2 game.

The diorama aspect of the game comes into play once you leave the dungeons, which contain a number of pieces to the town you are trying to reconstruct (why you are doing this is a little unclear to me for the time being). Once out of the dungeon, you begin laying the various pieces down: a house here, a giant windmill there, and trees and roads, and whatever else is buried in the respective dungeon. In addition, each structure has a



number of specific slots for accessories like fences, lanterns, even inhabitants, and by exploring the town as you create it, you learn what accessories people want, and you can formally finish off each building. Not only is this how the story and events unfold, but it's also interesting in that you can't buy specific items (though you do discover some of them in the dungeon) until you actually build and populate a shop. I like this idea.

Dark Cloud will become clearer to me in English, obviously, but my time with the Japanese version was rewarding. And even if this isn't going to be the PS2's answer to

PS2
sony playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Preview • developer hudson soft • publisher eighting • available in japan march

BLOODY ROAR 3

The latest game in the Bloody Roar series is coming to PlayStation 2 this March, courtesy of Hudson Soft. Bloody Roar 3 will let you experience the evolution of 3D fighting with superb graphics and effects that push the performance of Sony's console to new heights while running at the same high speeds for which its predecessors are famous. The game's stages are beyond comparison this time around, with awesome effects like an Air Force fighter that takes off and lands in the background as the combatants continue to fight. The character models are equally stunning and possess incredible facial expression and muscle movement.

The series' trademark "Beastorization" system is still in place of course. Once the gauge is filled, a human character can transform into a powerful beast with the press of a button. The advantages of this bestial form are numerous: increased power, heightened defense, superior jumping,

the ability to recover a limited amount of damage, and the supreme "Beast Drive" attack that makes possible amazing come-from-behind victories. New to the series, however, is the "Ultra Beastorization" system. When the "Beastorization" gauge is maxed out, pressing a certain combination of buttons grants heightened abilities beyond that of a regular beast form to the point of virtual invincibility, but only for 12 seconds. Afterwards, that fighter will be unable to utilize his beast form again for the remainder of the fight.

With new characters, a new story that delves deeper into the mystery of "Beastorization," and new, more intense gameplay, Bloody Roar 3 promises to please longtime fans of the series and newcomers alike.

-J. SAKAI



PS2

sony playstation 2 / ps2

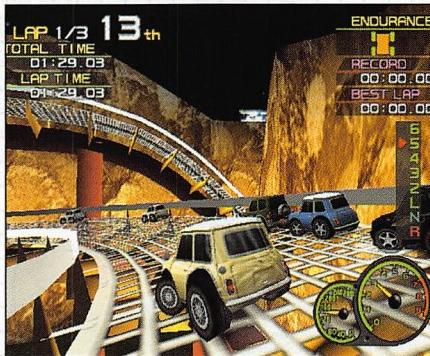
World Republic Preview • developer/publisher takara • available in japan now

CHORO Q HG

Good ol' Choro Q. Takara's venerable, super-deformed racing series has finally found its way to the PS2. And the result? It's Choro Q alright, but really pretty and with a twist.

This time around, Takara has tried to inject some real playability into the series, attempting to give the player more satisfaction beyond the kick of racing around in recognizable but squashed versions of real cars. Specifically, they've made an attempt to give the game more of a sensation of actual physics at work, eschewing the gimmicky and sometimes annoying powersliding system of the previous road-going games. Now, the cars handle a little more realistically, scrubbing off speed during moments of understeer, for instance. Does this fit the nature of the game? I think so, as it's now more enjoyable from a pure driving aspect.

But I'm not sure that I like the mock depth that Takara has gone for with Choro Q HG. Taking a page from Gran Turismo, license tests are now part of the formula. It's almost as if Takara want us to take this game sort of seriously and devote a lot of time to it, and one look at the cars proves that this is just not possible. Instead, they should have just concentrated, I think, on making an arcade-style

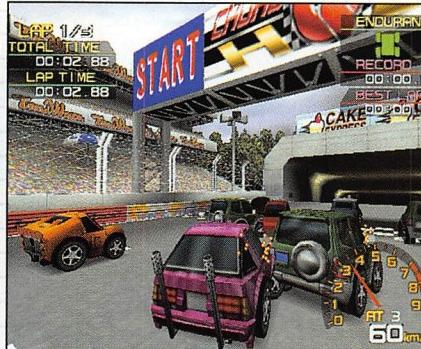


game, like Ridge Racer; even though the physics model is improved, it's not up to the task of sustaining the game through all the various trials.

But at least Choro Q HG looks good in relation to past games. Obviously, no one expects cutting-edge graphics from this series, but because of the PS2's inherent strengths, the high frame rate and resolution brings a new level of graphic sophistication. There's nothing terribly complex about the cars or the environments, but the game certainly looks really good.

If Choro Q HG is to come out in the States, perhaps Takara could rethink the game's structure. This isn't likely, but it would improve matters immeasurably. This is a game for simple, cute thrills, and it really shouldn't try to be anything else.

-MIKE "BAOFU" HOBBS



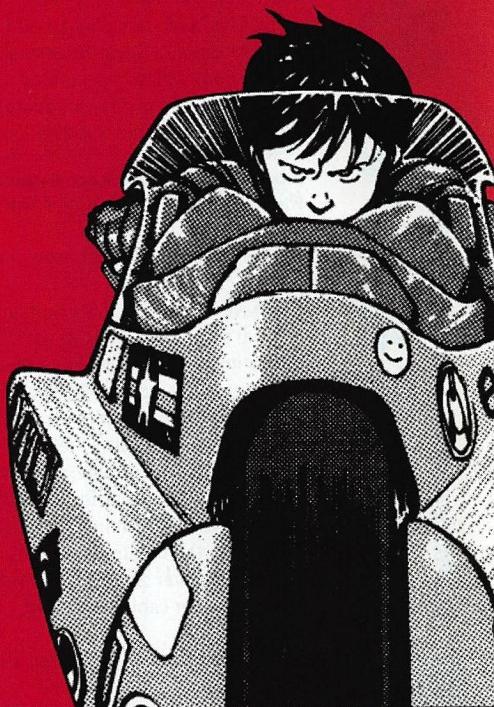
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By Katsuhiro Otomo



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World Republic Interview

Gundam mania

An Interview with Hirofumi Inagaki, the producer of *Gundam Ver. 1.0 for PlayStation 2* and the *Gundam Side Story* series.

GR: WHAT ASPECTS OF THIS GAME ARE YOU WORKING ON?

Mr. Inagaki: I am the producer of the entire project. Actually, I'm more like an outside producer. Since there is no producer within Beck Co., the director, Mr. Tokushima, could be considered the project leader. As a result, he and I have had meetings to find the best direction for Gundam to take on PlayStation 2. Since Mr. Tokushima worked on *Gundam Side Story* for Dreamcast, we first examined the PS2's abilities and then thought about what kind of Gundam game we could bring to the console. Other than game production, I also work on offering animation parts to Sunrise Co., recording voiceovers, the creation of CG movies, management of the schedule, and sales promotion. These are the main duties of Bandai's producer.

GR: WHEN WAS IT DECIDED THAT GUNDAM FOR PS2 WOULD BE AN ACTION GAME?

HI: Well, it was decided at the first stage of development. There are several Gundam project teams, and one is the *Gundam Side Story* team. This team has created all three *Gundam Side Story* titles for Sega Saturn and Sega Dreamcast. Another is the Gundam team for PlayStation, which has created *Gundam Ver. 1.0*, *Z Gundam*, and *Gyakushu no Shar* (*Shar's Counterattack*). These two teams worked together and created *Gundam* for PS2. There's also a strategic Gun-

Interview with Tomokazu Nagasima from Beck Co., creator of the 3D graphic models in *Z Gundam* and *Shar's Counterattack*.

GR: AS A GRAPHIC ARTIST, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PS2?

TT: I have been developing *Gundam* for PS2 since I finished my work on *Shar's Counterattack*. At that time, I could only display a model consisting of 10,000 polygons. During early development, I thought that Dreamcast was better since its library is much better, but lately, the quality of graphics on PS2 has been getting higher, as SCE suggested. As a result, I feel that I can do many things that I couldn't do before. For example, although a city area was already realized in *Gundam Side Story* for Dreamcast, it was almost pushing that hardware to its maximum capacity. This time, the stage is four times larger than the one in that game, and the number of objects being displayed is over 200,000. And we're not only displaying buildings, but also power cables, cars, etc.

GR: TREES ARE ALSO DISPLAYED THIS TIME, AREN'T THEY?

TT: I planted a lot of trees (laugh). In fact, we made a program for planting trees that automatically makes forests on the map when we indicate 'here is a forest.' The mobile suit Dom running in the forest and cutting trees is a great scene.

GR: HOW ABOUT MOBILE SUITS?

TT: The mobile suit models have become much more detailed. There are actually carvings drawn in, although most of them are done through textures. Anyway, the mobile suit I paid the most attention to is Dom. During the game though, most enemy mobile suits will be destroyed while they are still displayed small at a far-off distance, so I hope you attack using a beam saber once in a while (laugh).

dam team that has created the simulation series such as *Giren's Ambition* or *SD Gundam G Generation*. Since the PS2 is powerful new hardware, we thought that an action game with fully polygonal mobile suits would be the best choice for Bandai to showcase its abilities and potential.

When I was young, I used to buy plastic *Gundam* models, but I also wanted *Gundam* to move, not just be painted. To make *Gundam* move is a dream come true for my generation, and we are now about 30-years-old since it has been 20 years since *Gundam* was born. I want them to remember their teenage emotions, and I want them to feel like they were Amuro by controlling the *Gundam*.

GR: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE ORIGINAL GUNDAM AS THE SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE FIRST GUNDAM GAME ON PS2?

HI: The first reason is the class of PS2 users. We have attached a questionnaire onto the *Gundam* games to ask which *Gundam* they like the best. The most popular one is the first *Gundam*, and the second is *Z Gundam*. This time, we chose the first *Gundam* since *Z Gundam* has been released for both PSOne and Sega Saturn. Another reason is that the first *Gundam* was number one on the 'Japanese Animation Best 100.'

GUNDAM MILLENIUM

The *Gundam Millennium* Event was held at the Sony Building, in Ginza, on December 17, as a promotional event for the *Gundam* game on PlayStation 2. There were many high school students, families, and couples in attendance to play the first *Gundam* title for PS2, and they were surprised with its graphics quality. At the event, of course, there were many playable versions and people could play them at the trial corner. There were also life-size *Gundam* hand and Amuro Ray, and some people were taking pictures next to him. The Stamp Rally was held in the building, on the first seven floors, and at the eighth floor, there was a lottery corner where the first prize was a 1/10 3D *Gundam* POP (point of purchase display), the second prize was a collection of *Gundam* games, third was *Gundam* plastic models, and fourth was a *Gundam* poster. How was the *Gundam* game itself? In my opinion, I felt that it was a little frustrating since it had a more sim-like control. But it was still an early version, and the producer, Inagaki-san, told me that the control might be easier in the final version. The event was held until Christmas, and, as previously reported, the most expected game for the holiday is *Gundam*. In fact, most game shops' main playable demo has been *Gundam* (as of this writing, three out of five store game kiosks are *Gundam*).

-T. MIURA



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YEAR IN REVIEW

ANIME: REPUBLIC

EDITOR'S TOP 10

CHRISTIAN ALEXANDER



SAMURAI-X

#1

• 2000 ADVFILMS ENTERTAINMENT DVD

Samurai X was a bit of a shock. We all knew theoretically about Kenshin's dark past, and the schizophrenia that grew as a product of his past. However, the truth was something else entirely. It wasn't just seeing Kenshin kill. We knew about the Battousai. Seeing Kenshin kill in such an offhand manner went against the grain of everything that we accepted to be true about him. The combination of art, music, cinematography, and script lent a new level to Himura Kenshin that was previously only imagined. Put all of these things together and you have the greatest samurai anime since *Ninja Scroll*.



#2

RUROUNI KENSHIN

DVD • 2000 ANIME WORKS



What is the appeal of *Kenshin*? Try likeable characters, great fight scenes, or the exceptional story telling. But characters are what make *Kenshin* more addictive than Pocky Sticks. It's the simple fact that you care what happens to them. Playing a great parallel to *Samurai X*, anime series don't get much better than this.



#3 COWBOY BEBOP

DVD

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

Hands down, Spike is the coolest character created this year. *Bebop* manages to somehow push the envelope by going back in time. It successfully combines the overdone space theme, episodic crime adventure, and one of the funkiest opening sequences ever.



#4 PRINCESS MONONOKE

DVD

• 2000 MIRAMAX

Miyazaki has never failed to impress. *Princess Mononoke* not only looks spectacular, but it challenges the traditional roles of the hero vs. the villain in traditional storytelling. This is one of the rare anime that does exactly what it sets out to do.



#5 CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO

VHS • 2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

The fun factor of *Cagliostro* is positively off the scale. Very few anime can replicate the feeling that the viewer receives while watching *Lupin*. The humor is smart and slapstick, and the storytelling feels fairytale-ish and whimsical, which only adds to the fun.

#6 WINGS OF HONNEAMISE

DVD • 2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

Wings of Honneamise can really only be described as a work of art. The theme—mankind's first journey into space—can touch everyone. With some dabbling in religion and the darker parts of the minds of men, *Honneamise* makes you think.

#8 ESCAFLOWNE

DVD • 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

Escafowne is another one of those epic and beautiful anime. What I find unique about *Escafowne* is that one is not supposed to like all of the characters. Escafowne can make you hate and detest some of them, even if they are on the side of "good."

#9 TRIGUN

VHS • 2000 PIONEER ENTERTAINMENT

Trigun represents the new trend of unpredictable anime. Anime that starts out looking to be an archetypal format, but instead ends up being something deeper and more meaningful than you ever thought it would be. Vash is much more than a gun-toting idiot.

#7 NADIA

DVD • 2000 ADVFILMS ENTERTAINMENT

Has the idea of The City of Atlantis been overdone? Perhaps, but *Nadia* does it best. Maybe it's just that *Nadia* mixes in just the right amount of story, character, action, and elements of fun, making it one of the best anime that no one pays attention to.

#10 OUTLAW STAR

DVD • 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

Outlaw Star, simply put, is fun. It makes one wonder why they like this anime so much, as one absent-mindedly puts the next disc in the player. Don't ask why. Just watch it. It's best not to ponder mysteries of the universe sometimes.

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ANIME: REPUBLIC

EDITOR'S TOP 10

GAMER'S PERSONAL UNIVERSE



PRINCESS MONONOKE

• 2000 MIRAMAX

DVD



At its core, *Princess Mononoke* depicts a struggle between the species—man's dominion over the beasts of the forest, once upon a time in fourteenth-century feudal Japan—and the desecration of their sacred world in the interest of progress and profit. Within this framework, Miyazaki plays on the gamut of human emotion amidst one of the most beautifully drawn and animated films ever. Together with its soaring soundtrack and solid performances from Claire Danes, Billy Bob Thornton, Gillian Anderson, Jada Pinkett, Minnie Driver and Billy Crudup, *Princess Mononoke* blurs the lines between animation and live action.



OUTLAW STAR

DVD

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT



Following Gene Starwind and company around the galaxy was one of the highlights of my year. *Outlaw Star* began with a bang, flaunting some of the best character designs and animation ever for a TV series, and then, after developing all of its characters, blossomed into the single greatest series story-wise I've seen since *Evangelion*. Let's pray that one of the kids networks doesn't get its blades on this one.



#3 COWBOY BEBOP

DVD

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

Dripping with style and attitude, *Bebop* was the year's best in terms of overall appeal—thanks in no small part to the most stylized opening credits ever, brilliant writing, and ultra vixen Faye Valentine. And the best is yet to come: the movie's out next year!



#4 BLUE SUB NO. 6

DVD

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

The ultimate melding of traditional animation and CG (really) is highlighted by a truly diabolical villain, biting dialogue, and a breathtaking world overcome by the sea. The first time I saw *Blue Sub* I thought I was having an out-of-body experience, and it only got better from there.



#5 THE WINGS OF HONNEAMISE

DVD

• 2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

Gainax's first feature is one of the most brilliantly designed and told anime ever, with a somber underlying current that defies description. The DVD includes an assortment of unexpected features including the birth of the legendary Gainax!

#6 SIN: THE MOVIE

DVD

• 2000 ADVFILMS ENTERTAINMENT

ADV's East-meets-West video-game-based feature not only raised the bar for game-related anime, but is a cyber-punk action extravaganza in its own right. It's wonderfully drawn, detailed, and animated using modern techniques, and if this is a glimpse of what Lady Death promises, dig me a grave.

#7 PARALLEL DUAL

VHS

• 2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

Parallel Dual! Trouble Adventure plays like *Evangelion*-meets-*Tenchi*, save for better animation and ultra-modern techniques combining digital animation with cell shaded CG. Not that anything could ever top *Eva*, but this is the first similar story that actually warrants comparison.

#8 X: THE MOTION PICTURE

DVD

• 2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

Romanced by Clamp's incredible characters and the film's ethereal ambience, as a purely artistic endeavor it doesn't get much better than *X*: a sensory feast that takes you somewhere else for 102 minutes then drops you back off at home when it's done.

#9 TRIGUN

DVD

• 2000 PIONEER ENTERTAINMENT

I'll bet you 60,000,000,000,000 double dollars that once you start watching *Trigun* you won't be able to stop. Comedy and drama have never collided with such quirky, utterly addictive results. It's funny, it's sad, it's touchy feely, it's stupid—I like it.

#10 BUBBLEGUM CRISIS 2040

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Soft bodies in hardsuits: what's not to love about ADV's *Knight Sabers* re-ignition? Modern animation techniques and the classic hyper-dolls-vs.-evil-corporation story collide in the freshest update since *Dirty Pair*. *2040* stuttered mid series, but bounced back with a boom.



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ANIME: REPUBLIC EDITOR'S TOP 10



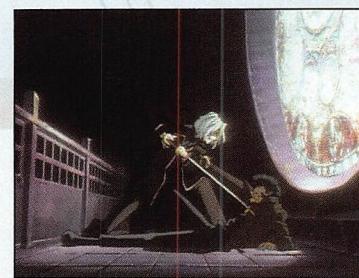
COWBOY BEBOP

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

DVD

#1

Bebop took choice elements from anime past—cool music, a tortured cast, sharp stories, and the most cinematic direction around—upping the expectations of animation forever. With its poignant writing hiding more moral punch than 90-percent of American television, *Bebop* regularly defies the medium's limitations by appealing to no particular age, creating episodic crime fiction that's both endearing and emphatic. Tarantino-meets-Miyazaki-meets-P.T. Anderson, director Shinichiro Watanabe and musician Yoko Kanno accepted the strength of *Bebop*'s *Lupin*-inspired jazz style, and created high-energy, serious-as-sin pulp fiction. Best of the year? Try *Best Ever*.



2

CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO

DVD

• 2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT



This anime was originally released in 1979, but Manga enhanced Cagliostro's colors and sound, and created a transfer of such high quality that you'll think it's new. Still one of the finest anime ever, Miyazaki's vibrant colorwork and perfectionist attention to movement show a mastery that inspired even *Bebop*. Lupin and Spike could be twins.



#3 SAMURAI X

DVD

• 2000 ADVFILMS ENTERTAINMENT

There is no one scene in *Samurai X* that stands out because the overall quality is consistently astonishing. Imagine the Hakkenden without an animation drop, or *Ninja Scroll* with subliminal depth, and you'll have the best-written, best-looking ninja epic ever.



#4 PRINCESS MONONOKE

DVD

• 2000 MIRAMAX

While *Mononoke* isn't Miyazaki's finest work, it's certainly his most socially conscious. Part philosophical rant on man's place in nature, part exercise in action storytelling, *Mononoke* is high-I.Q., mythical fiction. Sure the end's culturally dense, but what a ride!



#5 THE COCKPIT

VHS • 2000 URBAN VISION

Show me three better stories about motivation-facing death, and you're a liar. Matsumoto's wartime essays on man's spirit are his strongest character works yet. More mature and heroic than anything previous, the *Cockpit*'s both pretty and ponderous. Melodramatic? Maybe. Fine theater nonetheless.

#6 BLUE SUBMARINE NO. 6

DVD • 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT



Don't run from *Blue Sub*'s CGI-meets-2D integration. It looks considerably better than anything America's done, and the best scenes haven't a drop of action. Fresh and sci-fi, *Blue Sub* rates just below *Bebop* as Bandai's acquisition of the year.

#7 RUROUNI KENSHIN

DVD • 2000 ANIME WORKS

Appreciating *Samurai X* without first watching *Kenshin* isn't possible. Although lighter in tone, *Kenshin*'s writers wield foreshadowing like some thousand-fold sword, slicing through the deceptively banal tone with hints of deeper plots and promised morality plays. Keep an eye on this.

#8 ORIGINAL BUBBLEGUM CRISIS

DVD • 2000 ANIMEIGO ENTERTAINMENT

Nostalgia aside, the new *Crisis* sucks. Stone me. Missing the fancy new computer colors of 2040, this original *BGC* is more passionate, has a more moving soundtrack, and sports Masami Obari. Watch *Red Eyes* and *Night Vision*, then we'll debate your improvements.

#9 GOKU: MIDNIGHT EYE

VHS • 2000 URBAN VISION



From the director of *Wicked City* and *Demon City Shinjuku*, this *Goku: Midnight Eye* immediately strikes you as more detailed than most of the anime seen today. Violent, darkly colored, and super-heroey in its way, *Goku*'s solid, old-school fun.

#10 TENAMONYA VOYAGERS

DVD • 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT



A treat for long-time anime viewers, *Tenamonya* is comedy for we who hate comedy anime. Healthy on satire and character humor, *Tenamonya* looks gorgeous and has a wit that seems fresh, even if poking fun at other anime is old hat.

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GUNDAM-W Endless Waltz

THE MOVIE

COMING SOON TO HOME VIDEO

2.6.2001

After Colony 196. A year has passed since the events that took place in the original *Gundam Wing* television series. Tranquility has spread throughout the Earth and the colonies are at peace. The *Gundam* pilots now find themselves attempting to rebuild their lives in this new era. No longer having any need for their weapons of war, they have sent their *Gundams* into the sun to be destroyed. But suddenly, Relena Darlian, a high-ranking government official is kidnapped by a colony with aspirations of total domination. The *Gundam* pilots and their allies find themselves called into action once again. The Endless Waltz has begun...

Bonus!

Battlefield of Pacifists, is an original mini-comic which bridges the gap between the *Gundam Wing* TV series and the *Endless Waltz* movie. A must-have item for all *Gundam* fans. Bundled inside marked VHS and DVD*.

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ANIME: REPUBLIC

EDITOR'S TOP 10



CARD CAPTOR SAKURA

• 2000 PIONEER ENTERTAINMENT **DVD**



Card Captor Sakura is the quintessential magical girl anime, which comes as no surprise considering it's from the brilliance of CLAMP. The theme of this show is a simple tale of one girl's quest to capture all the Clow Cards, behind which magical spells are hidden. With the help of her friend Tomoyo, and the guidance of the Clow Cards' guardian, Keroberos starts a zany adventure of magic, fantasy, friendship and, of course, comedy. The costume designs, animation, and background art are nothing short of excellence. Quite possibly one of the most exciting and charming anime I've seen.



OUTLAW STAR

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT **DVD**



Outlaw Star is just charming in every conceivable way. While this series is somewhat perspicuously presented, the story, characters, and situations are wholly sophisticated. *Outlaw Star* is truly a fun and enjoyable anime to watch, and will make your mouth water for more after you see the last episode.



#3 COWBOY BEBOP

DVD

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

Arguably, *Cowboy Bebop* is one of the greatest anime series ever. The presentation of this anime is top notch, with each episode written with ingenuity and intriguing characters that undeniably enliven this gem of an anime.



#4 NADESICO

DVD

• 2000 ADV FILMS ENTERTAINMENT

You want fun in space? You got it. The characters in *Nadesico* really shine, especially the ever-so-charming Ruri-chan. Above all, *Nadesico* was so superbly written, it brings a new experience to the space anime genre.



#5 ORIGINAL BUBBLEGUM CRISIS

DVD • 2000 ANIMEIGO ENTERTAINMENT

The focus of this series is violent mecha action, bar none. The most striking element was its memorable action sequences and flawless storylines. Do watch the sub please; the dub is simply awful.

#6 KEY THE METAL IDOL

DVD

• 2000 PIONEER ENTERTAINMENT

#7 THE VISION OF ESCAFLOWNE

DVD • 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

An enchanting and beautifully made anime, *Escarflowne* is truly the pinnacle of mecha and fantasy. Captivating characters and an edge-of-the-seat plot, *Escarflowne* will prove to you that it's one to be reckoned with.

#8 FUSHIGI YUUGI

DVD • 2000 PIONEER ENTERTAINMENT

Quite simply, *Fushigi Yuugi* is a dramatic roller coaster ride. While *Fushigi Yuugi* was nothing short of shoujo-romance, it still presents a great blend of comedy, fantasy, and action. Better prepare your Kleenexes for this one, folks.

#9 RUROUNI KENSHIN

DVD

• 2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

#10 LOST UNIVERSE

DVD • 2000 ADV FILMS ENTERTAINMENT

I'd be a fool to think that there is another existent samurai anime that can compare to *Rurouni Kenshin*. I've watched this anime enough to know that you don't screw with a man who has a very ugly past.

Not the greatest space anime in the world, but just good enough to entertain even the hungriest of Megumi Hayashibara fans. While certain CG moments were cheesy and plain, the characters were still fun and comical.



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GAMERS' REPUBLIC EDITORS' TOP 5**D. Halverson**

1. Princess Mononoke **Miramax**
2. Parallel Dual! **Pioneer**
3. Generator Gawl **ADV Films**
4. Wings Of Honneamise **Manga**
5. A.N. Nanako **Pioneer**

S. Akinnuso

1. Tenamonya Voyagers **Bandai**
2. Cowboy Bebop **Bandai**
3. Samurai X **ADV Flims**
4. Rurouni Kenshin **Anime Works**
5. Princess Mononoke **Miramax**

C. Alexander

1. Princess Mononoke **Miramax**
2. Wings Of Honneamise **Manga**
3. Tenamonya Voyagers **Bandai**
4. Card Captor Sakura **Pioneer**
5. City Hunter **ADV Flims**

anime top 5

presented by bandai entertainment and gamers' republic

READERS' TOP 5

1. Cowboy Bebop **Bandai**
2. Evangelion **ADV Films**
3. Escaflowne **Bandai**
4. Blue Submarine No. 6 **Bandai**
5. Sin **ADV Films**

TOP 5 ANIME CONTEST**GRAND PRIZE:****Gundam Wing Endless Waltz****Special Edition VHS & DVD****5 Gundam Wing Endless Waltz Deluxe Action Figures****Gundam Wing Endless Waltz Theatrical Poster****Runners-up: (5)****Gundam Wing Endless Waltz VHS****Gundam Wing Endless Waltz Theatrical Poster**

To enter, send your top 5 anime picks on whatever parchment you choose to:

Gamers' Republic Anime Contest

32123 Lindero Canyon Road
Westlake Village, CA 91361

or enter online at:

dhalverson@gamersrepublic.com

gamers' republic

To enter the Bandai Entertainment/Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime Contest, simply send us a list of your favorite five anime, new or old. Make sure to include your name, address and age and send it to: Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215, Westlake Village, CA 91361, or e-mail our leader at dhalverson@gamersrepublic.com. First prize will receive: A **Gundam Wing Endless Waltz Special Edition VHS & DVD**, **5 Gundam Wing Endless Waltz Deluxe Action Figures**, **Gundam Wing Endless Waltz Theatrical Poster**, and a **1-year subscription to GR**. Runners-up will receive: A **Gundam Wing Endless Waltz VHS**, **Gundam Wing Endless Waltz Theatrical Poster**, and a **1-year subscription to GR**. Good Luck everyone!

Gamers' Republic would like to thank Bandai Entertainment for their support.

No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited.



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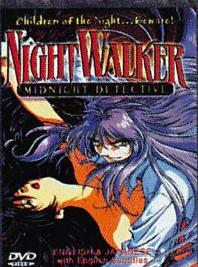


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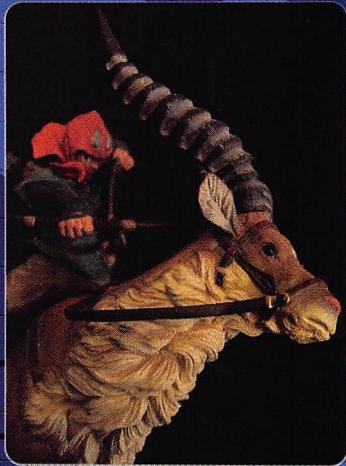
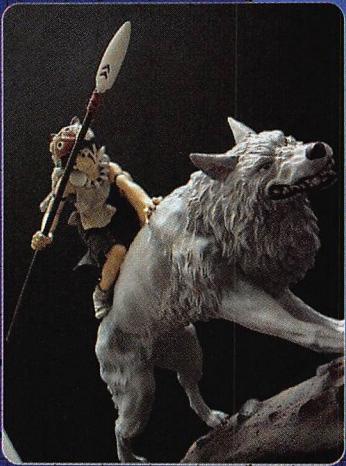
BEST OF GR SYNTETIX 2000

2000 ACTION FIGURE SERIES TOP 10

ACTION FIGURE OF THE YEAR

#1 : PRINCESS MONONOKE

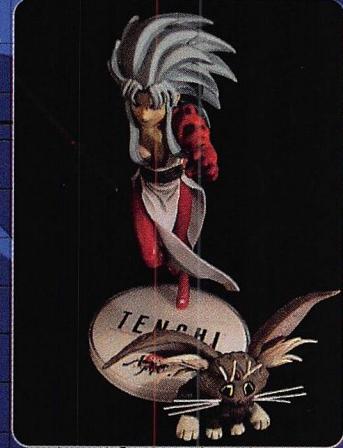
Lovingly sculpted to perfection, Ashitaka and Princess Mononoke come alive in these stunning figures from Palisades Marketing. These aren't merely the best figures this year; they're the best ever. At \$50.00 each, they're not cheap, but I'd have gladly paid more for three-dimensional renditions of Miyazaki's vision.



#1 :

MCFARLANE 3D ANIME

Once again in the under \$20.00 category, McFarlane Toys leads the pack with their stunning 3D anime series. MT never cuts corners. They do things one way: the right way. Kaneda and bike (sold separately), Tetsuo and, er, arm, Vash and kitty, and demonic Ryoko cabbit and Ryo-ohki are all masterfully represented. Yo, Todd, can we get Saber Marionette, Nanako, Outlaw Star and BeBop next year?



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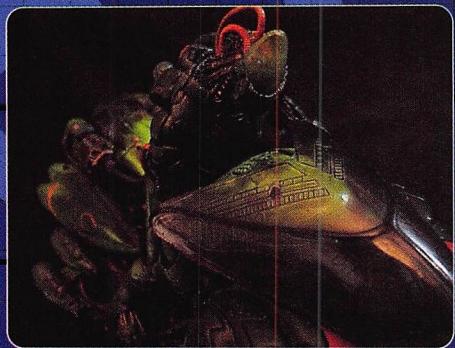
#2: STREET FIGHTER III SERIES 2

My anger that ReSaurus' Gex figures still haven't surfaced has been temporarily stayed thanks to their late, but once again exceptional, line of Street Fighter toys. The Series 2 fighters, adorned in rubber, are outstanding, especially Akuma in his player 2 color with transparent red hair.



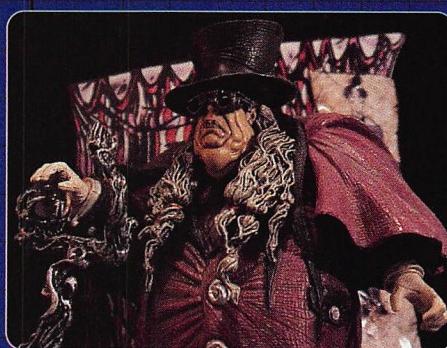
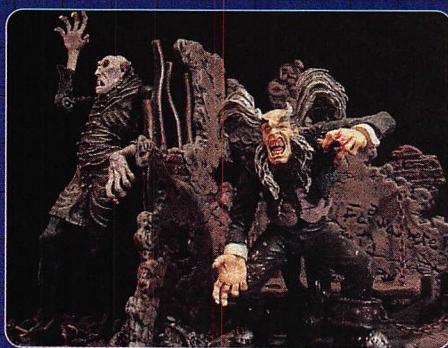
MCFARLANE NITRO RIDERS

Nitro Riders had it nailed until 3D anime and SF3 showed up. Who else would bless us with riders that actually fit onto their techno/organic/arachnid bikes, rubber tires, and kickstands? One question: where are the game and cartoon spin-offs?



#4: SILENT SCREAMERS

The short-lived Aztech Toys leave us with one of the most incredible diorama series ever created—Silent Screamers. Not only did Screamers boast the best accessories (including a corpse) of the year, but in terms of detail and presentation, these all get an A+.



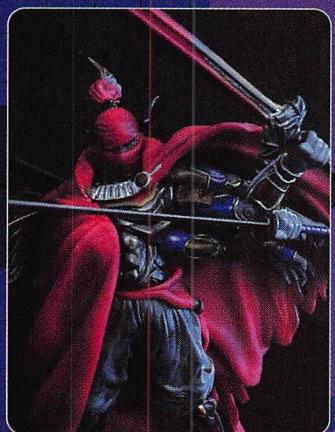
#5: ARMORED CORE 2

Talk about impressive sculptures. Coined "high-end action models," Kotobukiya's Armored Core 2 mechs look more like resin kits than they do articulated action figures. They're undoubtedly the year's top mecha figures, edging out the impressive Front Mission series and Gundam Wing.



FINAL FANTASY VIII GUARDIAN FORCE

Kotobukiya/Palisade's enemies from Final Fantasy VIII turned out to be more compelling than the heroes. Available in an array of impressive boxed sets and stand-alone figures, the series boasts excellent sculpting and detail, loads of accessories, and you don't have to wait for them to load!



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BEST OF GR SYNTETIX 2000

2000 ACTION FIGURE SERIES TOP 10...

=
#7:
=

12" MANDARIN SPAWN

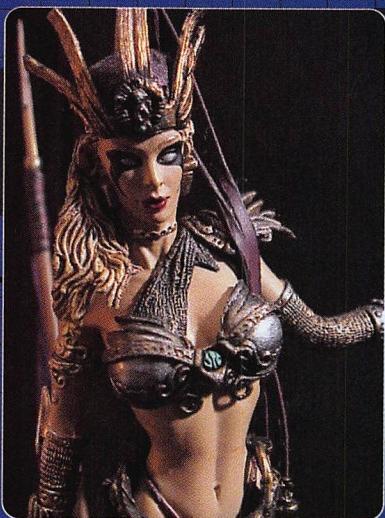
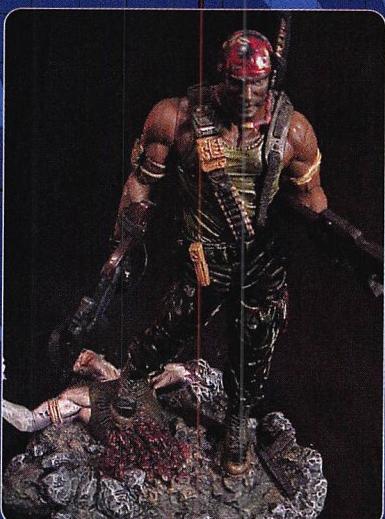
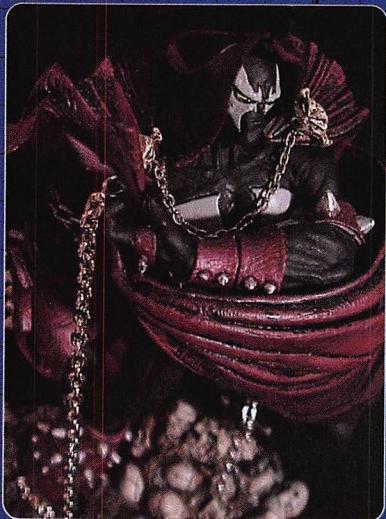
1999's action figure of the year grew up in 2000 to become the finest 12-inch collectible in the galaxy. From the rubber dress to the insanely detailed model itself, 12-inch Mandarin Spawn looks like it snacks on four-inch figures between meals.



=
#8:
=

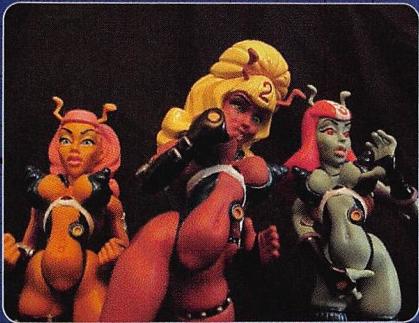
SPAWN SERIES 17

The Spawn legend lives on. Highlighted by a gruesome blood-splattered Medieval Spawn, the sumptuous man killer Jessica, and a clown gone mad, series 17 dons real chains, rubber appointments galore, and killer stands and accessories. How McFarlane Toys sells these for ten bucks is the real mystery.



=#9:= BARBA ROCKETS PATROL

Bet you've never seen these girls before. Neither had I until I ran across them on the net earlier this year. A cross between roller derby queens and er, sluts, the Barba



Rockets exude sex and sport. They can even grab their erect nipples. Now that's what I call an action figure.

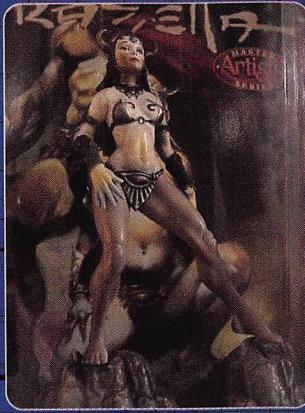
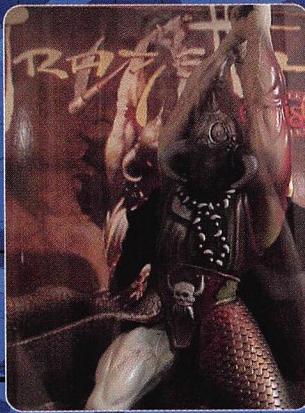
=#10:= WHERE THE WILD THING ARE

These little critters are probably partially responsible for Todd's vivid imagination—I know they were for mine. Popping them out of their storybook world, these perfect 3D renditions—an unexpected millennial treat—Where the Wild Things Are was one of 2000's very best surprises.



= REST EXCLUSIVE = FRAZETTA MASTERS

The Frazetta Master Art Series, offered as a Previews exclusive, almost defy description. These are on par with the Mononoke sculptures, replicating the stunning medieval stylings of the famous Heavy Metal artist Frank Frazetta.



= REST Game GOODY = LUNAR 2 GHALEON

Working Designs redefined promotions again this year with the Lunar 2 Ghaleon puppet and a 3-lb. box packed with goodies. Use him to sock the Grinch—the video game polar opposite.



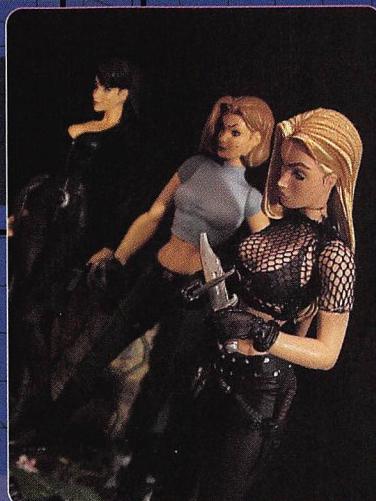
= BEST STATUE = THE DREDGE

Titan A.E. bore only one collectible statue but at 18" it is truly one of the most magnificent pieces you can own. It may use the energy in your house to nuke the planet, but it looks damn cool.



= BEST BABES IN A CLUSTER = DANGER GIRLS DIORAMA

McFarlane Toys put Danger Girl's Abbey Chase, Natalia Kassle, and Sydney Savage together in one breast-filled diorama and made me wish I was six inches tall—and made of hard plastic.



= BEST STATUE =

= REST Game GOODY =

• WONDERBORG

BANDAI • www.bandai.co.jp • RETAIL: APPROX \$120

The robots are coming. From the high end of Honda's P1 and Sony's Aibo to the newly sophisticated low-end represented by Bandai's ingenious Wonderborg, expect to see an onslaught of robots of ever increasing capabilities.

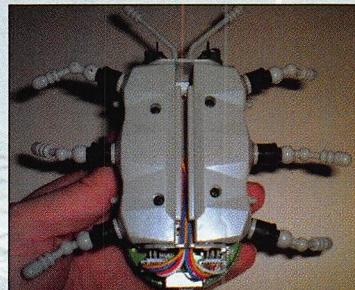
As a harbinger of things to come, and more importantly, as a very cool little toy, the Wonderborg is wonderful. Crawling around on six rotating legs or wheels, this little mechanical creature comes loaded with sensors, allowing it to negotiate the world in many different ways. But without a program running, the little Wonderborg will just sit there, not knowing what to do. This is where the WonderSwan comes in. Using

DESIRABILITY: *****

the included Robot Works cartridge, you can create a program, which is then beamed via infrared to the 'borg, telling the thing how to react to the outside world, sort of like a real life version of Artdink's Carnage Heart. A typical program might include commands to the Wonderborg to use its downward pointing infrared sensors to detect white, keeping it from falling off the edge of a colored table, or you could tell it to use its touch sensitive antennae to look for obstacles. Within basic programs like this, you can also tell the 'borg to beep, dance, or even look for other Wonderborgs in the area through the use of the so-called Pheromone sensor. There is also software included that will allow the Wonderborg to act as a real life virtual pet.

If Bandai decides to bring the Color WonderSwan to the States, and I think they should, then perhaps we will see the Wonderborg released here.

-M. HOBBS



GR GEAR

• PS ONE SCREEN

PELICAN • www.pelicanacc.com • RETAIL: \$149.99

DESIRABILITY: *****

For whatever reason, Sony's own screen for the cute little PS One isn't coming out until April, which has left the door wide open for third parties to swoop in and dilute the market with products of questionable quality. The first such screen that we have been able to sample comes from Pelican, and while the screen does work as intended, the quality of the image and sound are well below acceptable levels. Even though the screen is a TFT (Thin Film Transistor) active matrix, which should translate into a detailed, high contrast image, colors bleed and true black is a hopeless cause. And compounding the negative impression is shoddy build quality, with color and tint adjustments being nothing more than PCB style pots exposed on the right side of the display. Sony is doing a disservice by allowing the market for the PS One screen to become tainted by such sub par product.

-M. HOBBS



• MZ-R900

SONY • www.sony.co.jp • RETAIL: \$249

DESIRABILITY: *****

"The longer, the better," she says. Sony's MD Walkman is exactly what she had in mind. Thanks to a new compression format called MDLP, which compresses at twice the rate of ATRAC, you can record up to 320 minutes of music (roughly five music CDs) on one MDLP disc. And with this particular player, battery life is a whopping 66 hours. Plus, it is the lightest portable MD recorder/player on the planet because of a newly developed, single, 0.18-micron system LSI that includes both a 32bit RISC processor and 16Mbit DRAM, all wrapped in a beautiful magnesium body case. Also, Sony has increased the spin velocity by three times, so not only can you start listening quicker, but also find a song quicker.

-J. SAKAI



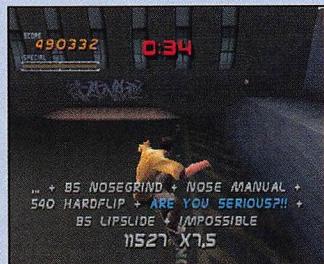


TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 is game engineering at its finest. The replay value of the game is incredible and with the extra cheats tucked away for gamers to find, it isn't surprising that it's being heralded as one of the best games of all time. What many might not know, is that inside the Options menu is a complete checklist of all the transfers for each level. Working down the list is a game in itself and flaunts the unbelievable flexibility of the game engine. Below are some of the hard to find and never-thought-possible transfers and their point values. Be prepared to be amazed, for at the bottom of these transfer tips is a trick that will amaze even the most hardcore THPS 2 fanatics. And you found it here and only here at GR.

LEVEL - SCHOOL II ARE YOU SERIOUS?!! - 2,500 points

SKATE YOUR WAY OVER INTO THE SECRET AREA. GO DOWN THE STEPS AND TURN RIGHT. THERE WILL BE A SMALL QUARTER PIPE UP AGAINST THE WALL. HIT THE RAMP WITH SOME GOOD SPEED AND PULL A NICE AIR THAT WILL ACTIVATE YOUR SPECIAL METER. YOU NEED THIS FOR THE NEEDED SPEED TO COMPLETE THE TRANSFER. WHEN YOU RE-ENTER THE QUARTER PIPE YOU'LL SCREAM TOWARDS A TINY KICK RAMP. LAUNCH OFF THE RAMP AND GRIND THE RAIL CORNERING THE HALLWAY FOR EXTRA SPEED. ONCE YOU'VE LANDED USE THE SMALL WOODEN KICKER RAMP TO LAUNCH YOU OVER THE WALL AND ALL THE WAY OVER TO THE ROOFTOP. THIS IS FAIRLY DIFFICULT TO DO, AS YOU NEED TO BE GOING VERY FAST TO EVEN COME ANYWHERE NEAR TO MAKING THIS TRANSFER. LOCKING INTO A NOSEGRIND WHEN YOU HIT THE RAIL WILL HELP MAINTAIN A FAST ENOUGH SPEED TO COMPLETE.



LEVEL - MARSEILLES
KNUCKLIN' FUTS!!! - 2,000 points

GO STRAIGHTFORWARD UNTIL YOU GET TO A WOODEN LEDGE. UP ON THE WOODEN LEDGE IS A LAMP THAT CRASHES THROUGH THE FENCE OPENING UP A HOLE, WHICH LEADS TO THE SECRET AREA. DROP DOWN INTO THE BOWL NEAR THE WOODEN LEDGE. FOR THIS TRANSFER, YOU NEED TO LAUNCH FROM THE BOWL, ONTO A GRIND ON TOP OF THE LAMP.



LEVEL - NEW YORK SIDEWALK BOMB - 1,000 points

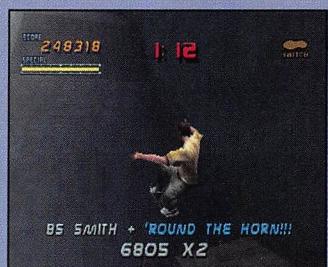
NOTE: YOU NEED TO COLLECT THE FIVE SUBWAY TOKENS TO OPEN THE SUBWAY ENTRANCE.

GO UP THE ESCALATOR, AND THERE WILL BE A LEDGE ON THE LEFT. OLLIE AND GRIND ALONG THE LEDGE, AND YOU WILL SEE THE AWNING ALONG THE STREET BELOW. WHEN YOU GET NEAR THE END OF THE LEDGE, OLLIE OFF THE LEDGE AND NAIL A GRIND ONTO THE CANOPY OR CAUTION RAIL BELOW; TIMING IS DIFFICULT.



LEVEL - VENICE BEACH 'ROUND THE HORN!!! - 2,500 points

TURN LEFT FROM THE START OF THE LEVEL, DOWN THE DOUBLE FIVE SET TO ARRIVE IN AN AREA WITH A LONG QUARTER PIPE THAT CURVES AROUND. JUMP ONTO A GRIND NEAR THE BEGINNING OF THE QUARTER PIPE, AND GRIND ALL THE WAY AROUND UNTIL YOU GET TO THE END OF IT. YOU NEED TO GRIND THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE QUARTER PIPE, INCLUDING DOWN THE BANK AT THE END OF THE QUARTER PIPE TO GET THIS TRANSFER.



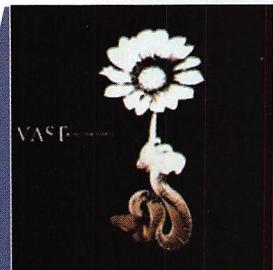
LEVEL - PHILADELPHIA FLATLANDS TECHIN' - 500 points

TURN RIGHT AT THE START OF THE LEVEL, AND SKATE FORWARD ALONG THE PATH, GOING PAST THE SMALL GREEN KICKER RAMPS. JUMP OVER THE STAIRS, AND WHEN YOU LAND, TURN AROUND SO THAT YOU'RE FACING THE STAIRS YOU JUST JUMPED OVER. THERE ARE FOUR RAILS LINING THE STAIRS. GRIND UP ONE OF THE RAILS, AND THEN OLLIE OFF AND LAND INTO A MANUAL ON THE FLAT. ONCE YOU'VE LANDED, MANUAL TOWARD THE FUN-BOX, AND CONTINUE TO THE RIGHT. CARRY ON ALL THE WAY DOWN THE PATH UNTIL YOU REACH A SMALL SET OF STAIRS AND OLLIE TO THE AREA BELOW. THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST TESTS OF MANUAL CONTROL; IT'S A SHAME IT'S ONLY WORTH 500 POINTS.



LEVEL - BULWING THREADIN' THE NEEDLE - 2,000 points

SKATE DOWN AND AROUND THE HALF PIPE TO AN AREA DIRECTLY BEHIND THE STARTING POINT OF THE LEVEL. YOU'LL COME TO THE QUARTER PIPE BEHIND THE HALF PIPE. ON THE QUARTER PIPE IS A SMALL GAP. WAY UP HIGH ABOVE THE GAP IS A ROLL IN. THERE IS A SMALL GAP BETWEEN THE YELLOW RAILS THAT SUPPORT THIS ROLL IN. TO GET THIS TRANSFER, USE THE QUARTER PIPE ON ONE SIDE TO LAUNCH YOU THROUGH THE GAP AND LAND ON THE QUARTER PIPE ON THE OTHER SIDE. GOOD TIMES.



1. VAST - *Music for People*

VAST's second release is filled with the passion that made the first so spectacular. Shades of goth, industrial, metal, trance – this is the best new music in a decade. The latter tracks will rearrange your DNA. Take the plunge at realvast.com.

2. Geddy Lee - *My Favorite Headache*

Geddy's first solo effort filled the vacancy in the audio portion of my brain, as I wait for another Rush LP. Spirited lyrics, trademark bass licks, and a sound that's pure Geddy—I have this CD on a constant loop.

3. U.P.O. - *No Pleasantries*

Beneath U.P.O.'s angry lyrics lies a phenomenal band offering a signature sound in a "me too" world.

4. Perfect Circle - *mer de noms*

Their amazing sound alone solidifies this debut, but they look just as good—this is the whole package. Perfect Circle fit perfectly into the void left by the Smashing Pumpkins.

5. Poe - *Haunted*

Poe's tribute to her father has a range reminiscent of Jagged Little Pill...without the PMS, and a masterful title track in "Haunted."

DAVE HALVERSON



1. Radiohead - *Kid A*

The Antarctic colors in Tom York's head may have lead to a frigid, initially impenetrable collection of songs, but there was enough creative energy bursting from this densely layered album to make any music lover completely forget about the creative ice age of today's radio play.

2. Lapdog - *Near Tonight*

After the break up of one of '90s most talented and unnoticed bands, Toad the Wet Sprocket, secondary singer Todd Nichols and two other Toad members formed Lapdog, which led to the year's most melodic, infectious, unpretentious rock album.

3. U2 - *All That You Can't Leave Behind*

Shedding the awkward electronica, U2 return to what made them soar in their early years—grand rock & roll.

4. Aimee Mann - *Bachelor No. 2*

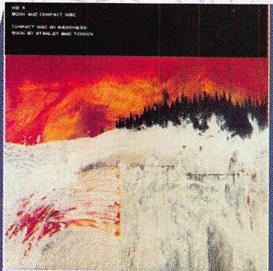
Elegant and understated, Bachelor No. 2 is a supple collection of songs from an exquisite songwriter.

5. Sarah Harmer - *You Were Here*

Harmer's lovely, intimate voice belongs on the coffee-house tour; her music shaping imagery as warm and satisfying as a latte on a snowy December evening.

BRADY FIECHTER

GR MUSIC YEAR IN REVIEW EDITORS TOP 5



1. Radiohead - *Kid A*

Experimentation, more often than not, can lead to disaster, but Radiohead's starkly beautiful and almost lyrically opaque *Kid A* is truly inspired.

2. Bjork - *Selmasongs*

A short but very sweet collection of Bjork tunes from her film acting debut in Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*.

3. Philip Glass -

Symphony No. 5: Requiem, Bardo, Nirmankaya

An ambitious, sprawling work covering nothing less than the evolution of human society, *Symphony No. 5* is Philip Glass at his very best.

4. Tan Dun -

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon Soundtrack

A simply gorgeous score to one of the most entertaining and viscerally satisfying films of the year.

5. Madonna

Music

Madonna traded mood for French-influenced electronic funk in her entertaining follow up to *Ray of Light*.

MIKE HOBBS



1. The Very Best of Cat Stevens - Cat Stevens

Cat blended simple arrangements with poignant messages and infused it all with a unique style that no one can copy. These songs are not dated and still relevant.

2. Sade - *Lovers Rock*

There is a richness, subtlety and emotional range that wasn't apparent before. The simplicity of the arrangements only serves to accentuate the raw beauty of her voice.

3. Outkast - *Stankonia*

Outkast continues to step their level up to new heights. *Stankonia* is a hip-hop masterpiece, as is every piece of work they have done.

4. Deltron 3030

Del's lyrical flow is infallible. Automator once again provides incredible beats and Kid Koala tears it up on the tables. The most forward thinking hip-hop album ever.

5. Snoop Dogg - *Tha Last Meal*

Snoop returns to old form while finding new hooks and lyrical tricks. You will definitely be sippin' yak and smokin' gak to these tracks.

TOM STRATTON



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A&R Director HIDEYUKI AKIYAMA Art Director AYANO KOSHIRO Illustration HITOSHI ARIGA
Logo KATARU UCHIMURA US Design and Layout J. CAMPOS

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BRADY FIECHTER

- 1. Toy Story Ultimate Toy Box** Bursting with extras and holding two of the most visually inventive, cleverly written, just plain fun feature cartoons ever, this boxed set makes me smile every time I look through my collection.
- 2. Gladiator** One of last year's best movies loses little of its sensational visual texture on DVD, and what grandeur does float away is saved by a grand story.
- 3. Magnolia** Paul Thomas Anderson is in love with the camera and his colorful characters; I'm in love with his movie the more I watch it.
- 4. American Beauty** This is the best movie on the list—its emotion is devastatingly beautiful in the presence of a crushing mood—but whose decision was it to forget the satisfying extras?
- 5. Princess Mononoke** Marvel at the exquisite visual strokes and take comfort in the fact that the movie can be properly watched with subtitles.
- 6. The Limey** Steven Soderbergh proves why he is one of today's most interesting directors.
- 7. Three Kings** War movie gold.
- 8. Talented Mr. Ripley** Decadent, ravishing, with so many great actors.
- 9. Eyes Wide Shut** An intoxicating meditation.
- 10. Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn** Finally.

DAVE HALVERSON

- 1. Gladiator** From the moment my eyes and the first battle met, I knew this would be the cinematic equivalent of ascension. As Maximus' hand swept along the tall wheat, I wept like a baby, barely able to mask my tears. No film has ever had that effect on me. *Gladiator* is perfection. Ridley Scott actually topped *Blade Runner*—a feat I thought impossible. This is your Oscar winner or they should all be thrown to the lions.
- 2. Toy Story 2** Disney and Pixar finally found a way to make me love a G movie. The magic of *Toy Story* begins with the CG but it's ultimately the story that makes it a winner. The DVD, a two-disc set that contains both movies and piles of extras, is a spectacular ensemble well on its way to becoming a classic.
- 3. Princess Mononoke** See anime year in review.
- 4. Titan A.E.** The most underrated film of 2000. Inspired performances by Bill Pullman, Matt Damon, Drew Barrymore, Nathan Lane and John Leguizamo met with some of the most breathtaking animation and CG to ever hit the big screen... and no one came. Scary Movie hits and *Titan A.E.* bombs? The world is going to Hell in a hand basket.
- 5. Any Given Sunday** Oliver Stone brought his amazing style to football and created the greatest sports epic in motion-picture history.
- 6. The 13th Warrior** Norseman, nature, flesh-eating madmen and set designs from the Gods. I laughed. I cried.
- 7. The Big Blue** One of my favorite directors, Luc Besson's tale of friendship and daring permeates the screen. This uncut treasure is a magical excursion you will never forget.
- 8. The Road to El Dorado (chapter skipping the fruity songs)** Sappy Elton John tunes are easily avoidable, otherwise, this is one of the most gorgeous animated features ever produced. The actors really poured their hearts into it and the featurette provides insight into what it takes to make a film of this caliber. Treasure every frame.
- 9. Fight Club** Bet you'll never look at a waiter or bar of soap quite the same way. Nothing short of a modern masterpiece—and how about that ending?! David Fincher went where few dare but he forgot the first rule of *Fight Club*: Intelligent movies and American audiences rarely get together.
- 10. The Virgin Suicides** Two words – Kirsten Dunst.

MIKE HOBBS

- 1. Being John Malkovich** A clever DVD to one of the most creative films of last year.
- 2. Jaws** The first classic Spielberg released on DVD.
- 3. Toy Story 2 Deluxe** Superlative films, unbelievable transfers.
- 4. Princess Mononoke** Miyazaki's beautiful masterpiece is incredible on DVD.
- 5. Eyes Wide Shut (Japanese uncut)** In Japan, Kubrick's farewell film was unedited and perfect.
- 6. Gladiator** Another Ridley Scott visual feast, with great acting from Crowe and Phoenix.
- 7. The Abyss Special Edition** The true version and an encyclopedic DVD.
- 8. Magnolia** Wonderful film, cracking DVD.
- 9. Three Kings** Best war film since Altman's *M*A*S*H*.
- 10. Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan** The best Star Trek film, but a fairly lousy DVD.

SHOLA AKINNUSO

- 1. Gladiator** Both the finest DVD and finest movie of the year, *Gladiator* is the big-budget reason to own a DVD player.
- 2. Magnolia** My favorite flick of last year, this misses #1 because *Gladiator*'s bonuses are so cool.
- 3. Seven Platinum Edition** Four audio commentaries, beautiful packaging, and minor color touch ups. 'Nuff said.

- 4. The Sopranos** All 13 episodes, a crystal-clear transfer, and director/writer commentary. Now where's OZ?
- 5. Boogie Nights** There's an obvious PT Anderson bias here. The new commentary doesn't hurt.
- 6. Any Given Sunday** An exposé on football so good that the game during the movie isn't important.
- 7. Princess Mononoke** In Japanese because we demanded it!
- 8. Cowboy Bebop** If Tarantino made anime, it would be Bebop.
- 9. Eyes Wide Shut** Many sulk about deleted scenes, but EWS is one of the most powerful movies I've ever seen.
- 10. X-Men** As a longtime X-fan, this is a mandatory purchase.

EDITOR'S TOP 10 DVDS 2000**CINEMATRIX YEAR IN REVIEW SPECIAL**

AN INTERVIEW WITH CLIVE BARKER

By Tom Stratton

I first learned of Clive Barker over 10 years ago through a book called *Weaveworld*. Though completely outlandish, everything seemed almost beautifully plausible, though utterly fantastic, and I can quite honestly say it managed to wring every available emotion out of me. Clive Barker must surely understand the depth of the human spirit, the problems people face, the imperfections and addictions that many normal people struggle with. Now he is stirring his magic in video games and his vision is just as spectacular. The title is *Undying*, by Dreamworks, and it could mark a rebirth for FPS games. I was fortunate enough to sit with Mr. Barker and learn more about this prolific person.

Gamers' Republic: What provoked you to get involved in this medium of entertainment?

Clive Barker: Actually, I've wanted a game under my sleeve for a long time. My brother worked for a long time and was there at the beginning of *Psynopsis*. He would show me stuff and it looked interesting, but nothing really stuck or caught my attention. But I'm a storyteller and I like finding new ways for telling stories. I like all types of stories too: jokes, songs, anywhere where the experience takes the recipient from one place to another and changes them. You can't be at the same state at the end of a story as you were in the beginning. Otherwise, it's just the news; otherwise, it's just the weather. You must have change. Games, by and large, don't do that. Games don't strive to change you, it's not even part of their basic thinking. They mark time by and large, don't they?

GR: This is true.

CB: They occupy you, but they mark time. We have a daughter and she's eleven. She plays *Super Mario Bros.* all the time...and that f'ing tune just goes round and round and round and round. It starts Friday night and ends on Sunday night. And it just goes round and round. The numbers on your score might go higher, the mountain you're climbing may get steeper...but it is not story...it's breathing, it's barely staying alive. I'm not saying that *Undying* is going to be William Faulkner, but I am saying that we are taking a really honest crack at trying to get some story built into the gameplay. There is still more game than story, but we are doing damn well.

GR: So what is your part in making *Undying*?

CB: I am the story man. You know they have these people called play doctors on Broadway. They come in and sort of fiddle with bits and pieces and that's what I felt I did with *Undying*. I didn't want to change anything that was good, and there was a huge amount. I just wanted to provide some very delicate surgery. Cutting away some things that we really didn't need, that were sort of blocking the flow of the narrative. You know, the things that can cause a game to be a bit muddy. And I think we achieved that. Then the characters needed to be revamped. The hero needed to be sexy and he wasn't. I told them (Dreamworks) they needed to make a hero that someone would want to sleep with.

GR: (laughing) You definitely have a strong understanding with the problem with games. You mention them as a way for marking time.

Why would you get involved then, knowing that is an endemic problem with the medium?

CB: Well, for one...I'm dealing with a bunch of much, much smarter cookies than some of the other people I have had initial meetings with. And it became very apparent, very quickly, that these were people who wanted to change the rules. Everyone involved with this project wanted to change what people think about games and these (FPS) types of games. Gaming is where movies were in the '30s. You know? No one has made *Intolerance* yet; no one has made *Birth of a Nation*. But it will get there and maybe we'll make it.

GR: How did you arrive at finding a comfortable balance of story and action?

CB: We held on to the essential quality of games, which is excitement and the challenge and the solving of puzzles and, without question, violence. With those essentials, we need to move towards something which has some emotional heart. Something we can start to care a little bit about. We need to take you to a place where you'll need to catch your breath and get the shivers. And not just because of the price.

(laughing) I would like to see more going for the heartstrings; I would like to see more genuine horror. And I don't mean the casual horror of a monster with a lot of teeth that gets blown up. I want things that you dread.

GR: I know when I read your books, there are many times I've had to put the book down because I became too involved and sincerely scared. Is this your same goal with games?

CB: In the next four or five years I will create *The Exorcist* for these darn machines, if it kills me. I need something that will make you shut it off. And that challenge is fascinating to me. I've done 22 books, worked a lot in theatre and made some movies. Now, there is this growing thing that people are consuming and they want the best product. And I believe some of the best minds to deliver this are involved with this project. The game shouldn't have just my name on the box; it should be a list of people who created this game. Mine is the name that will hopefully get someone to pick it up and buy it. The truth of the matter is that this game was created by a group of talented, inspiring people who took some of my ideas and on other occasions turned around and fired back that they were some of the dumbest ideas I ever had. And you know, looking back, I did say some pretty dumb things, but I was learning. (laughing) That's my defense.

GR: Have you found it harder or easier coming into a project that was already well off the ground?

CB: Easier and harder. I think easier because I wasn't starting from a blank canvas and there was something to work from during our first meeting. Harder because I think of myself as being respectful of other people's work.

GR: This has truly been great. I appreciate your time and candidness and it has been an experience I will always remember. Thank you.

CB: The pleasure was all mine. This has been a wonderful discussion.

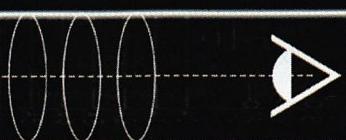
GR



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FALLOUT



Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to:
**Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215,
Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA** (editorial@gamerspublic.com)

Dear GR,

GWB is the new prez, you got your wish. Granted, Lieberman and Tipper Gore in the White House wouldn't have been very good for the gaming industry, but you'd rather have a nimrod for president? On the bright side, Dubya will provide us with four years of laughs. Then again, with Gore losing, we won't get to see any HOT FIRST DAUGHTERS. We need relief from eight years of Chelsea Clinton. Stay frosty, and please, dont let GR sink. If it does, start another publication, and I'll be sure to pick it up.

Frank Jiang

Frank,

To tell you the truth, I really want four more years of Bill. The man oozes charisma, knows how to throw a party, and is a real person, not some marionette for the spinsters. He got secret serviced in the Oval Office and lied about it, just like we would! How cool is that? Dubya will provide fun, fun, fun, but the guy could also get off the plane in China and say, "Wow, Japan is big!" I'm a lil' scared. Then again, Gore may have passed laws that we must all chew our food 25 times. The dude is so freakin' buttoned up. Whatever happens, if we don't get nuked, the NASDAQ inches up, and the surplus holds up, Dubya'll be a regular hero. Oh, and are you sure you meant hot? I saw a little chunky butt action.

Dear GR,

Usually, I'm happier than a little Japanese school girl (Hee-hee!) when I hear news about classic games from Sega being remade or brought back. But right now I'm kinda happy and sad (kinda like rain on a sunny day) at Sega's decision to release the Smash Pack Bundle for the Dreamcast. Happy because I can't wait to play my favorite 16- & 32-bit games like Shining Force, Streets of Rage 2 (Woo-Hoo!!), Revenge of Shinoobi, Altered Beast, Phantasy Star 2, Golden Axe, Columns, Vectorman and Sonic (even though part two is better). So what's my problem (other than the school girl thing)? It's the fact that Sega, out of all the games in the world, decides to pick Sega Swirl (Why?) and Wrestle War (???). In the name of all that

is good and by the power of Greyskull...Why?! What happened to the Sega CD games? Namely, a game that gets skipped again and again only to appear once on PC: Sonic CD (Sonic Boom), one of the greatest if not the best Sonics ever made! The music in that game is some of the best you'll ever hear from a videogame (sure the Japanese version had better tunes but Sega can put both on a GD-ROM). If you don't believe me go to www.segasonic.net and download a couple of tunes — namely the Intro, Collision Chaos (Present) and Tidal Tempest (Present). But anyway, I'm sure you and your readers would love to have classics like Sonic

CD, Chakan, and Burning Rangers put in the box or sold for a cheap price. Because I'm sure no one in their right mind misses Wrestle War!!! So please help me make this year the best for Sega and tell me how to get this done.

Son

Sonic CD does seem like a no-brainer for the collection, as does Chakan (those last few levels rocked) and I'd rather see the likes of Green Dog than Swirl. Wrestle War is obviously bait for the WWF and WCW masses though, so, it may help sell the package. If the first one does well, I'm sure we can look forward to more. Personally I'd like to see Alicia Dragoon, LandStalker, Dynamite Headdy...

Dear GR,

Hey, I really can't think of an appropriate title for this email, 'cause in all honesty it doesn't really have a concrete subject so I'll just hope your reading this anyway and if not, well...that's okay too, (heh). GR is really the only excellent videogame mag out there now in my opinion. That said, I also enjoy your other pop culture inserts (music/movies) and have to thank you for getting me into Vast, who I just recently saw live and they were great. I think it's really cool that you guys have such eclectic tastes in music. Just two real quick questions concerning music, of all things, and then I'm outta here. First, just wondering what you thought of the recent Marilyn Manson CD (I got unexpectedly dragged into him with the

awesome Mechanical Animals) which is really a mix of his other two major albums and I know you didn't really get into the other one. The other question isn't really a question at all, just asking if you've heard/telling you about a really cool, underappreciated band called Superdrag. If you haven't heard 'em I suggest getting a song off of (gasp) Napster. Anyway, if you read all of this thanks, I realize you're probably extremely busy having to keep up with the magazine. So thanks, keep up the great mag.

Great Mag.
Eric Deits

Eric

The new Manson blows. He thinks he's the devil again. I thought Mechanical Animals was the beginning of a Bowie-like, shape-shifting trend, but I guess it was a fluke. The guy's done the good thing with Rose McGowen and he can't let go of the trauma of organized religion? What a waste! I'm so glad you found VAST, I'll follow suit and check out Superdrag.

Dear GR,

I just got Super Magnetic Neo. It is very, very fun! And the 60fps helps with its appeal to. At first, for some reason, it looked like a clunky Crash Bandicoot clone (of which, I've played all the Crashes), but it is NOT – actual fresh play mechanics, due to the north and south polarity magnet powers. It also seems quite challenging. Wasn't it you who was hyping this game months ago? I'd call this a real 'sleeper' – it probably didn't sell well, but I find it excellent. Hmm... would a page or two in your mag be possible, recommending "Sleepers" that new system owners may have missed, and can pick up cheaply now? Just a thought.

Ron Lloyd

Ron,

We did everything to ignite Neo and people didn't seem to react. It's one of the best original platformers in years, it's just really hard and a little short. It's a shame no one came out for it because Genki was ready to make a sequel had it done well. The Sleepers section is already in the works. You read our minds!

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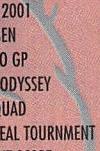
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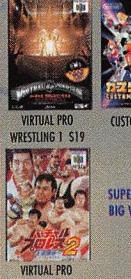
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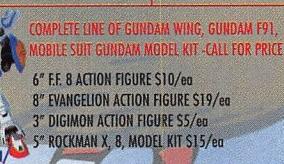
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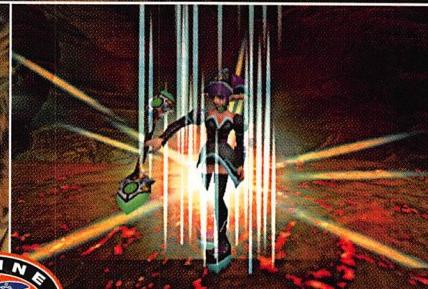
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